

# THE LIVING AGE.

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## SERVICE.

BY J. T. TROWBRIDGE.

WHEN I beheld a lover woo

A maid unwilling,  
And saw what lavish deeds men do,  
Hope's flagon filling,—  
What vines are tilled, what wines are spilled,  
And madly wasted,  
To fill the flask that's never filled,  
And rarely tasted :

Devouring all life's heritage,  
And inly starving ;  
Dulling the spirit's mystic edge,  
The banquet carving ;  
Feasting with Pride, that Barmecide  
Of unreal dishes ;  
And wandering ever in a wide,  
Wide world of wishes :

For gain or glory lands and seas  
Endlessly ranging,  
Safety and years and health and ease  
Freely exchanging :  
Chiselling Humanity to dust  
Of glittering riches,  
God's blood-veined marble to a bust  
For Faïne's cold niches :

Desire's loose reins, and steed that stains  
The rider's raiment :  
Sorrow and sacrifice and pains  
For worthless payment :—  
When, ever as I moved, I saw  
The world's contagion,  
Then turned, O Love ! to thy sweet law  
And compensation,—

Well might red shame my cheek consume !  
O service slighted !  
O Bride of Paradise, to whom  
I long was plighted !  
Do I with burning lips profess  
To serve thee wholly,  
Yet labor less for blessedness  
Than fools for folly ?

The wary worldling spread his toils  
Whilst I was sleeping ;  
The wakeful miser locked his spoils,  
Keen vigils keeping :  
I loosed the latches of my soul  
To pleading Pleasure,  
Who stayed one little hour, and stole  
My heavenly treasure.

A friend for friend's sake will endure  
Sharp provocations ;  
And knaves are cunning to secure,  
By cringing patience,  
And smiles upon a smarting cheek,  
Some dear advantage,—  
Swathing their grievances in meek  
Submission's bandage,

Yet for thy sake I will not take  
One drop of trial,  
But raise rebellious hands to break  
The bitter vial.  
At hardship's surly-visaged churl

My spirit sallies :  
And melts, O Peace ! thy priceless pearl  
In passion's chalice.

Yet never quite, in darkest night,  
Was I forsaken :  
Down trickles still some starry rill  
My heart to waken.  
O Love Divine ! could I resign  
This changeful spirit  
To walk thy ways, what wealth of grace  
Might I inherit !

If one poor flower of thanks to thee  
Be truly given,  
All night thou snowest down to me  
Lilies of heaven !  
One task of human love fulfilled,  
Thy glimpses tender  
My days of lonely labor gild  
With gleams of splendor !

One prayer,—“ Thy will, not mine ! ” and  
bright,  
O'er all my being,  
Breaks blissful light, that gives to sight  
A subtler seeing ;  
Straightway mine ear is tuned to hear  
Ethereal numbers,  
Whose secret symphonies insphere  
The dull earth's slumbers.

“ Thy will ! ”—and I am armed to meet  
Misfortune's volleys ;  
For every sorrow I have sweet,  
Oh, sweetest solace !  
“ Thy will ! ”—no more I hunger sore,  
For angels feed me ;  
Henceforth for days, by peaceful ways,  
They gently lead me.

For me the diamond dawns are set  
In rings of beauty,  
And all my paths are dewy wet  
With pleasant duty ;  
Beneath the boughs of calm content  
My hammock swinging,  
In this green tent my eves are spent,  
Feasting and singing.

—*Atlantic Monthly.*

## TIMON.

CAST on this globe by cold mechanic Fate,  
To breathe and suffer till I perish thence,  
Choose thou, my soul, instead of love or hate,  
The temperate sphere of calm indifference,  
Matching against the infinite pitiless power,  
That makes and breaks a universe at will,  
A mind as feelingless and firm, until  
The hurrying darkness of the final hour  
Blots thee to nothing. Let the human race,  
Weak, wanton, treacherous, cruel, pass thine eye  
As pictures, to be viewed a little space  
From out thy stoical security—  
Then yielded to oblivion. Come what may,  
Matter and soul to change or ruin tend ;  
Life's only pleasure is, that every day  
But brings our natures nearer to their end.

—*Dublin University Magazine.*

From The North British Review.

#### WORDSWORTH : THE MAN AND THE POET.

THE great stirring of men's minds, with which the last century closed, and the present set in, expressed itself in no way more conspicuously than in its prodigality of poetic genius. What gave the impulse to the broader, profounder, more living spirit, which then entered into all regions of thought, who shall determine? To recount the common literary commonplaces on this subject, to refer that great movement of mind to the French Revolution, or to the causes of that Revolution, is easy; but such vague talk does not really increase our knowledge. Perhaps it may be for the present enough to say that the portentous political outbreak in France was itself but one manifestation of the new and changed spirit which throughout Europe had penetrated all departments of human thought and action. Whatever the causes, the fact is plain, that with the opening of this century there was in all civilized lands a turning up of the subsoil of human nature, a laying bare of the intense seats of action, thought, and emotion, such as the world had seldom, if ever before, known. The new spirit reached all forms of literature, and changed them; in this country it told more immediately on poetry than on any other kind of literature, and recast it into manifold and more original forms. The breadth and volume of that poetic outburst can only be fully estimated by looking back to the narrow and artificial channels in which English poetry since the days of Milton had flowed. In the hands of Dryden and Pope, that which was a natural, free-wandering river became a straight-cut, uniform canal. Or, without figure, poetry was withdrawn from country life, made to live exclusively in town, and affect the fashion. Forced to appear in courtly costume, it dealt with the artificial manners and outside aspects of men, and lost sight of the one human heart, which is the proper haunt and main region of song. Of nature it reproduced only so much as may be seen in the dressed walks and gay parterres of a suburban villa. As with the subjects, so with the style. Always there was neatness of language, and correctness, according to a conventional standard; often there was terseness, epigrammatic point, manly strength; but along with these there was monotony, constraint, tameness of melody. Those who

followed,—Collins and Gray, Goldsmith and Thompson,—though with finer feeling for nature, and more of melody, could not shake themselves wholly free of the tyrant tradition, and throw themselves unreservedly on nature. Burns, if in one sense an anticipation of the nineteenth century poetry, is really, in reference to his contemporaries, to be regarded as an accident; he grew so entirely outside, and independently, of the literary influences of his time. Yet, though little affected by contemporary poets, he was powerful with those who came after him. Wordsworth owns that it was from Burns he learnt the power of song founded on humble truth. It was Cowper, however, who first of English poets brought poetry back from the town to the country. His landscape, no doubt, was the tame one of the English midland counties; there was in it nothing of the stern, wild joy of the mountains. His sentiment moved among the household sympathies, not the stormy passions. But in Cowper's power of simple narrative and truthful descriptions, in his natural pathos and religious feeling, more truly than elsewhere, may be discerned the dawn of that new poetic era with which this century began. When we remember that during its first thirty years appeared all the great works of Wordsworth, Scott, Byron, Southey, Coleridge, Shelley, Keats, not to mention many a lesser name, we may be quite sure that posterity will look back to it as one of the most wonderful eras in English literature. What other age in this, we had almost said in any, country, has been, within the same space of time, so lavish of great poets? In England, at any rate, if the Elizabethan and the succeeding age had each one greater poetic name, no age can show so goodly a poetic company. Those who began life, while many of those poets were still alive, and who can perhaps recall the looks of some of them, while they still sojourned with us, may not, perhaps, value to the full the boon which was bestowed on the generation just gone. Only as age after age passes, and sees no such company again appear, will men learn to look back with the admiration that is due to that poetic era. To sum up in one sentence the manifold import of all that those poets achieved, we cannot, perhaps, do better than borrow the discriminative words of Mr. Palgrave in his "Golden Treasury." They "carried to further perfection the later ten-

dencies of the century preceding, in simplicity of narrative, reverence for human passion and character in every sphere, and impassioned love of nature: whilst maintaining on the whole the advances in art made since the Restoration, they renewed the half-forgotten melody and depth of tone which marked the best Elizabethan writers; lastly, to what was thus inherited, they added a richness in language and a variety in metre, a force and fire in narrative, a tenderness and bloom in feeling, an insight into the finer passages of the soul, and the inner meanings of the landscape, a larger and a wiser humanity, hitherto hardly attained, and perhaps unattainable even by predecessors of not inferior individual genius."

It is now our purpose to call attention for a little to one of that poetic brotherhood, the eldest born, and the hardiest, most original innovator of them all. For a survey of Wordsworth and his poetry there would seem to be now the more room, because his popularity, which during his lifetime underwent so remarkable vicissitudes, has, during the fourteen years since his death-receded, and seems now to be at the ebb.

It would form a strange chapter in literary history to trace the alternate rise and fall in poetic reputations. To go no farther back than the contemporaries of Wordsworth, how various have been their fortunes! Some, as Byron, were received, almost on their first appearance, with a burst of applause which posterity is not likely fully to reverberate. Some, as Scott (we speak only of his poetry), were at first welcomed with nearly equal favor, afterward, for a time, retired before a temporary caprice of public taste, but have since resumed what was their earliest, and is likely to be their permanent, place; others, as Campbell, had at once the poetic niche assigned them, which they are likely hereafter to fill; while others, as Shelley and Keats, received little praise of men till they themselves were beyond its reach. Wordsworth had a different fortune from any of these. For more than twenty years after his earlier poems appeared, he experienced, not simply neglect, but an amount of obloquy such as few poets have ever had to encounter. But cheered by his own profound conviction that his work was true and destined to endure, and by the sympathy of a very few discerning men, he calmly and cheerfully bode his hour. In time, the

clamor against him spent itself; the reaction set in between the years 1820 and 1830, reached its culmination about the time of his Oxford welcome in 1839, and may be said to have lasted till his death in 1850. Since then, in obedience to that law which gives living poets a stronger hold on the minds of their own generation than any poet, even the greatest, of a past age, Wordsworth may seem to have receded somewhat in the world's estimate. But his influence is, in its nature, too durable to be really affected by these fashions of the hour. It is raised high above the shifting damps and fogs of this lower atmosphere, and shines from the poetic heaven with a benign and undying light. The younger part of the present generation, attracted by newer, but certainly not greater, luminaries, may not yet have learned fully to recognize him. But there are many now in middle life, or past it, who look back to the time of their boyhood, or early youth, when Wordsworth first found them, as a marked era in their existence. They can recall, it may be, the very place and the hour, when, as they read this or that poem of his, a new light, as from heaven, dawned suddenly within them. The scales of custom dropped from their eyes, and they beheld all nature with a splendor upon it, as of the world's first morning. The common sights and sounds of earth became other than they were. Man and human life, cleared of the highway dust, came home to them more intimately, more engagingly, more solemnly, than before; for their hearts were touched by the poet's creative finger, and new springs of thought, tenderer wells of feeling, broke from beneath the surface. And though time and custom may have done much to dim the eye, and choke the feelings, which Wordsworth once unsealed, no time can ever efface the remembrance of that first unveiling, nor destroy the grateful conviction that to him they owe a delicate and inward service, such as no other poet has equally conferred. Something of this service Wordsworth, we believe, is fitted to render to all men with moderately sensitive hearts, if they would but read attentively a few of his best poems. But to receive the full benefit, to draw out, not random impressions, but the stored wisdom of his capacious and meditative soul, he, above all modern poets, requires no cursory perusal, but a close and consecutive study. It was once common to call him mystical and unin-

telligible. That language is seldom heard now; but many, especially young persons, or those trained in other schools of thought, or in no school at all, will still feel the need of a guide in the study of his poetry; for what is best in him lies not on the surface, but in the depth. It is so far hidden that it must needs be sought for. Not that his language is obscure; what he has to say is expressed, for the most part, as clearly, and as adequately, as it is possible for thoughts and feelings of this kind to be expressed. But a large portion of these are of such a nature, so near, yet so hidden from men's ordinary ways of thinking, that the reader, if he is to apprehend them at all, must needs himself go through somewhat of the same processes of feeling and reflection as the poet himself passed through. The need of this reflective effort on the part of the reader is inherent in the nature of many of Wordsworth's subjects, and cannot be dispensed with. No doubt the effort is rendered much lighter to us than it was when his poems first appeared, so much of what was then new in Wordsworth has since passed into current literature, and found its way to most educated minds. Still, with all this, there remains a large—perhaps the largest—portion of Wordsworth's peculiar wisdom unabsobered, nor likely to be soon absorbed by this excitement-craving, unmeditative age. A thorough and appreciative commentary, which should open the avenues to the study of Wordsworth, and render accessible his imaginative heights, and his meditative depths, would be a boon to the younger part of this generation. The opening chapter of such a commentary would first set forth the facts and circumstances of the poet's life, would show what manner of man he was, how and by what influences his mind was matured, from what points of view he was led to approach nature and human life, and to undertake the poetic treatment of these. A portion of such a chapter we propose to place now before our readers, at least so far as to describe the facts of Wordsworth's early life and the influences among which he lived, up to the time when he settled at Grasmere, and addressed himself to poetry as the serious business of his life.

Wordsworth was sprung from an old North-Humbrian stock, as contrasted with the South-Humbrian race, a circumstance which has stamped itself visibly on his genius

The name of Wordsworth had been long known in the West Riding of Yorkshire, about the course of the Dove and the Don. Of old they had been yeomen, or landed gentry; for both of these they call themselves in old charters, at Penistone, near Doncaster. In this neighborhood they can be traced back as far as the reign of Edward III. From Yorkshire the poet's grandfather is said to have migrated westward, and to have bought the small estate of Stockbridge, near Penrith. His father, John Wordsworth, was an attorney, and having been appointed law-agent to the then Earl of Lonsdale, was set over the western portion of the wide domain of Lowther, and lived in Cockermouth, in a manor-house belonging to that noble family. John Wordsworth married Anne Cookson, daughter of a mercer in Penrith, whose mother, Dorothy, was one of the ancient northern family of Crackenthorpe, a name of note, both in logical and theological lore. These facts may be of little moment in themselves; but they serve to show that in the wisdom of Wordsworth, as in so many another poet, the virtues of an ancient and worthy race were condensed, and bloomed forth into genius. In that old mansion-house at Cockermouth, William was born on the 7th of April, 1770, the second of four sons. There was only one daughter in the family, Dorothy, who came next after the poet. Cockermouth, their birthplace, though beyond the hill country, stands on the Derwent, called by the poet, "fairest of all rivers," and looks back to the Borrowdale Mountains, among which that river is born. The voice of that stream, he tells us, flowed along his dreams while he was a child. When five years old, he used to spend the whole summer day in bathing in a mill-race, let off the river, now in the water, now out of it, to scour the sandy-fields, naked as a savage, while the hot, thundering noon was bronzing distant Skiddaw; and then to plunge in once more.

His mother, a wise and pious woman, told a friend that William was the only one of her children about whom she felt anxious, and that he would be "remarkable either for good or evil." According to the Scottish proverb, he would either "make" a spoon or spoil a horn." This was probably what he himself calls his "stiff, moody, and violent temper." Of this, which made him a

wayward and headstrong boy, all that he seems afterwards to have retained was that resoluteness of character, which stood him in good stead when he became a man.

Of his mother, who died when he was eight years old, the poet retained a faint but tender recollection. At the age of nine, William, along with his elder brother Richard, left home for school. It would be hard to conceive a better school-life for a future poet than that in which Wordsworth was reared at Hawkshead. This village lies in the vale, and not far from the lake, of Esthwaite, a district of gentler hill-beauty, but in full view, westward and northward, of Kirkstone Pass, Fairfield, and Helvellyn. Hawkshead School, as described in the "Prelude," must have been a strange contrast to the highly-elaborated school-systems of our own day.

High pressure was then unknown; nature and freedom had full swing. Bounds and locking-up hours they had none. The boys lived in the cottages of the village dames, in a natural friendly way, like their own children. Their play-grounds were the fields, the lake, the woods, and the hillside, far as their feet could carry them. Their games were crag-climbing for ravens' nests, skating on Esthwaite Lake, setting snares for woodcocks. For this latter purpose they would range the woods late on winter nights, unchallenged. Early on summer mornings, before a chimney was smoking, Wordsworth would make the circuit of the lake. There were boatings on more distant Windermere, and when their scanty pocket-money allowed, long rides to Furness Abbey and Moorcombe Sands. In Wordsworth's fourteenth year, when he and his brother were at home for the Christmas holidays, their father, who had never recovered heart after the death of his wife, followed her to the grave. The old home at Cockermouth was broken up, and the orphans were but poorly provided for. Their father had but little to leave his children; for large arrears were due to him by the strange, self-willed then Earl of Lonsdale, and these his lordship never chose to make good. But the boys, not the less, returned to school, and William remained there till his eighteenth year, when he left for Cambridge.

From Hawkshead, Wordsworth took several good things with him. In book-learning, there was Latin enough to enable him to read

the Roman poets with pleasure in after-years; of mathematics, more than enough to start him on equality with the average of Cambridge Freshmen; of Greek, we should suppose not much, at least, we never hear of it afterward. It was here that he began that intimacy with the English poets which he afterward perfected; while for amusement he read the fictions of Fielding and Swift, of Cervantes and Le Sage; but neither at school, nor in after-life, was he a devourer of books.

Of actual verse-making his earliest attempts date from Hawkshead. A long copy of verses, written on the second centenary of the foundation of the school, was much admired; but he himself afterwards pronounced them but a "tame imitation of Pope." Some lines composed on his leaving school, with a few of which the edition of his works of 1857 opens, are more noticeable, as they, if not afterwards changed, contain a hint of his maturer self. But more important than any juvenile poems, or any skill of verse-making acquired at Hawkshead, were the materials for after-thought there laid up,—the colors laid deep into the groundwork of his being. In the "Evening Walk," composed partly at school, partly in college vacations, he notices how the boughs and leaves of the oak darken and come out when seen against the sunset. "I recollect distinctly," he says, nearly fifty years afterward, "the very spot where this first struck me. It was on the way between Hawkshead and Ambleside, and gave me extreme pleasure. The moment was important in my poetical history; for I date from it my consciousness of the infinite variety of natural appearances, which had been unnoticed by the poets of any age or country, so far as I was acquainted with them; and I made a resolution to supply in some degree the deficiency. I could not have been at that time above fourteen years of age." Not a bad resolution for fourteen! And he kept it. It would be hardly too much to say that there is not a single image in his whole works which he had not observed with his own eyes. And perhaps no poet since Homer has introduced into poetry, directly from nature, more facts and images which had not hitherto appeared in books.

But more than any book-lore, more than any skill in verse-making, or definite thoughts about poetry, was the free, natural life he led at Hawkshead. It was there that he was

smitten to the core with that love of nature which was the prime necessity of his being ; not that he was a moody or peculiar boy, nursing his own fancies apart from his companions. So far from that, he was foremost in all schoolboy adventures,—the sturdiest oar, the hardiest cragsman at the harrying of the raven's nest. Weeks and months, he tells us, passed in a round of school tumult. No life could have been every way more unconstrained and natural. But school tumult though there was, it was not in a made playground at cricket or rackets, but in haunts more fitted to form a poet,—on the lakes and the hillsides. Would that some poets, who have since been, had had such a boyhood, had walked, like Wordsworth, unmolested in the cool fields, not been stimulated at school by the fever of emulation and too early intellectuality, and then hurled prematurely against the life-wrecking problems of existence ! Whatever stimulants Wordsworth had, came from within, awakened only by the common sights and sounds of nature. All through his schooltime, he says, that in pauses of the " giddy bliss " he felt

" Gleams like the flashing of a shield, the earth  
And common face of nature spake to him  
Rememberable things."

And as time went on, and common school pursuits lost their novelty, these visitations grew deeper and more frequent. At nightfall, when a storm was coming on, he would stand in shelter of a rock, and hear

" Notes that are  
The ghostly language of the ancient earth,  
Or make their dim abode in distant sounds."

At such times he was aware of a coming in upon him of the " visionary power." On summer mornings he would rise before another human being was astir, and alone, from some jutting knoll, watch the first gleam of dawn kindle on the lake :—

" Oft in these moments such a holy calm  
Would overspread my soul, that bodily eyes  
Were utterly forgotten, and what I saw  
Appeared like something in myself, a dream,  
A prospect of the mind."

Is not this the germ of what afterward became the " Ode on Intimations of Immortality "? or rather it is of hours like these, that that Ode is the glorified remembrance.

In October, 1787, at the age of eighteen, Wordsworth passed from Hawkshead School to St. John's College, Cambridge. College life, so important to those whose minds are

mainly shaped by books and academic influences, produced on him no very lasting impression. On men of strong inward bias the university often acts with a repulsive rather than a propelling force. Recoiling from the prescribed drill, they fall back all the more entirely on their native instincts. The strippling of the hills had not been trained for college competitions ; he felt that he was not " for that hour, and for that place." The range of scholastic studies seemed to him narrow and timid. The college dons inspired him with no reverence ; their inner heart seemed trivial ; they were poor representatives of the Bacons, Barrows, Newtons of the old time. As for school honors, he thought them dearly purchased at the price of the evil revelries and narrow standard of excellence which they fostered in the eager few who entered the lists. Altogether, he had led too free and independent a life to put on the fetters which college contests and academic etiquette exacted. No doubt he was a self-sufficient, presumptuous youth, so to judge of men and things in so famous a university. Such, doubtless, he appeared to the college authorities ; very disappointing he must have been to his friends at home. They had sent him thither, with no little trouble, not to set himself up in opposition to authority, but to work hard, and thereby to make his livelihood. And perhaps home friends and college tutors were not altogether wrong in their opinion of him, if we are to judge of men not wholly by after results. Wordsworth at this time may probably enough have been a headstrong, disagreeably independent lad. Only there were latent in him other qualities of a rarer kind, which in time justified him in taking an independent line.

When he arrived in Cambridge, a northern villager, he tells us that there were other poor, simple schoolboys from the north, now Cambridge men, ready to welcome him, and introduce him to the ways of the place. So, leaving to others the competitive race, he left himself, in the company of these, drop quietly down the stream of the usual undergraduate jollities :—

" If a throng were near,  
That way I leaned by nature ; for my heart  
Was social, and loved idleness and joy."

It sounds strange to read in the pompous blank verse of the " Prelude," how, while still a Freshman, he turned dandy, wore hose

of silk, and powdered hair. And again, how in a friend's room in Christ's College, once occupied by Milton, he toasted the memory of the abstemious Puritan poet till the fumes of wine reached his brain,—the first and last time when the future water-drinker experienced this sensation. During the earlier part of his college course he did just as others did,—lounged and sauntered, boated and rode, enjoyed wines and supper parties, "days of mirth and nights of revelry," yet kept clear of vicious excess.

When the first novelty of college life was over, he grew dissatisfied with idleness. Sometimes, too, he was haunted by prudent fears about his future maintenance. He withdrew somewhat from promiscuous society, and kept more by himself. Living in quiet, the less he felt of reverence for those elders whom he saw, the more his heart was stirred with high thoughts of those whom he could not see. As he lay in his bedroom in St. John's, he could look into the ante-chapel of Trinity, and, on moonlight or starlight nights, would watch the great statue there—

"Of Newton with his prism and silent face,  
The marble index of a mind forever  
Voyaging through strange seas of thought, alone."

He read Chaucer under the hawthorn by Trompington Mill, and made intimate acquaintance with Spenser. Milton he seemed to himself almost to see moving before him, as, clad in scholar's gown, that young poet had once walked those same cloisters in the angelic beauty of his youth.

So his time at Cambridge was not wholly lost. Two advantages at least he gained, —noble thoughts about the great men who of old had tenanted that "garden of high intellects," and free intercourse with his fellow-men of the same age and of varied character, —a special gain to one whose life, both before and afterwards, was passed so much in retirement.

During the summer vacations he and his sister Dorothy, who had been much separated since childhood, met once more under the roof of their mother's kindred in Penrith. With her he then had the first of those rambles—by the streams of Lowther and Emont—which were afterwards renewed with so happy results. Then, too, he first met May Hutchison, his cousin, and his wife to be:—

"By her exulting outside look of youth  
And placid, tender countenance, first endeared."

It was during his second or third year at Cambridge, when he had somewhat withdrawn from society, and lived more by himself, that he first seriously formed the purpose of being a poet, and dared to hope that he might leave behind him something that would live. His last long vacation, to reading men often the severest labor of their lives, was devoted to a walking tour on the Continent along with a college friend from Wales. For himself he had long cast college studies and their rewards behind him; but friends at home, it may readily be imagined, could not see such foolhardiness without uneasy forebodings. What was to become of a penniless lad who thus played ducks and drakes with youth's golden opportunities? But he had as yet no misgivings; he was athirst only for nature and freedom. So with his friend Jones, staff in hand, he walked for fourteen weeks through France, Switzerland, and the north of Italy. With four shillings each daily they paid their way. They landed at Calais on the eve of the day when the king was to swear to the new constitution. All through France, as they trudged along, they saw a people rising with jubilee to welcome in the dawn of, as they thought, a new era for mankind. Nor were they onlookers only, but sympathizers in the intoxication of that time, joining in the village revels and dances of the frantic multitude. But these sights did not detain them, for they were bent rather on seeing nature than man. Over the Alps, along the Italian lakes, they passed with a kind of awful joy. As they hurried down the southern slope of the Alps, Wordsworth tells us that the woods, "decaying, never to be decayed," the drizzling crags, the cataracts, and the clouds appeared to him no longer material things, but spiritual entities, "characters in a dread Apocalypse."

In January, 1789, Wordsworth took a common degree and quitted Cambridge. The crisis of his life lay between this time and his settling down at Grasmere. He had resolved to be a poet; but even poets must be housed, clothed, and fed; and poetry has seldom done this for any of its devotees, least of all such poetry as Wordsworth was minded to write. But it was not the question of bread alone, but a much wider, more complex one, which now pressed on him,—the same which so many a thoughtful youth, on leaving the university, with

awakened powers but no special turn for any of the professions, has had to face,—the question, What next? In fact, the more gifted the querist, the harder becomes the problem.

This mental trial, incident at all times to early manhood, how must it have been aggravated to a youth such as Wordsworth, turned loose on a world just heaving with the first throes of the French Revolution! He had seen it while it still wore its earliest auroral hues, when the people were mad with joy, as at the dawn of a regenerated earth. That he should have staked his whole hope on it, looked for all good things from it, who shall wonder? Coleridge, Southey, almost every high-minded young man of that time, hailed it with fervor. Wordsworth would not have been the man he was, if he could have stood proof against the contagion. In leaving Cambridge, he had gone to London. The spring and early summer months he spent there, not mingling in society, for probably he had few acquaintances, but wandering about the streets, noting all sights, observant of men's faces and ways, haunting the open book-stalls. During these months he tells us that he was preserved from the cynicism and contempt for human nature which the deformities of crowded life often breed, by the remembrance of the kind of men he had first lived amongst, in themselves a manly, simple, uncontaminated race, and invested with added interest and dignity by living in the same hereditary fields in which their forefathers had lived, time out of mind, and by moving about among the grand accompaniments of mountain storms and sunshine. The good had come first, and the evil, when it did come, did not stamp itself into the groundwork of his imagination.

The following summer he visited his travelling companion Jones in Wales, made a walking tour through that country, and beheld at midnight, on Snowdon, that marvellous moonlight vision, which towards the end of the "Prelude" he employs as an emblem of the transmuting power which resides in a high imagination, and which it exerts on the visible universe.

When in London he had heard Burke speaking from his place in the House of Commons on the great debates called forth by the revolution then in full progress; but he had listened, unconvinced. In November,

1791, he passed to Paris, and heard there the speeches that were made in the Hall of the National Assembly, while Madame Roland and the Brissotins were in the ascendant. A few days he wandered about Paris, surveyed the scenes rendered famous by recent events, and even picked up a stone, as a relic from the site of the demolished Bastile. This rage for historic scenes he however confesses to have been in him more affected than genuine. From Paris he went to Orleans, and sojourned there for some time to learn the language. His chief acquaintance there was Beaupois, a man, according to Wordsworth's description, of a rarely-gifted soul, pure and elevated in his aims. In youth he had been devoted to the service of ladies, with whom beauty of countenance, grace of figure, and refined bearing made him a great favorite. But now, though by birth one of the old French nobles, he had severed himself from his order, and given himself with chivalrous devotion to the cause of the poor. One day, as Wordsworth and he were walking near Orleans, they passed a hungry-looking girl leading a half-starved heifer by a cord tied to its horn. The beast was picking a scanty meal from the lane, while the girl, with pallid hands and heartless look, was knitting for her bread. Pointing to her, Beaupois said with vehemence, "It is against that we are fighting." As they two wandered about the old forests around the city, they eagerly discussed, both the great events which were crowding on each other and also those abstract questions about civil government and man's natural rights, which the times naturally suggested. Wordsworth owns that he threw himself headlong into those questions without the needful preparation, knowing little of the past history of France and of her institutions, and wholly unversed in political philosophy. He only saw that the best ought to rule and that they don't. In his boyhood, he says, he had lived among plain people, had never seen the face of a titled man, had therefore no respect for, nor belief in, such. He therefore now became a patriot and republican, determined that kings and aristocracies should cease, and longed for "a government of equal rights and individual worth," whatever that may mean. In the days that were coming, abject poverty was to disappear, equality was to bring in a golden time of happiness and virtue. After

some months, spent together in sharing dreams like these, they parted,—Wordsworth for Blois, and then for the "fierce metropolis;" Beaupois, to perish ere long—

" Fighting in supreme command  
Upon the borders of the unhappy Loire."

When, in the autumn of 1792, Wordsworth came from Blois to Paris, the September massacre had taken place but a month before; the king and his family were in prison; the Republic was proclaimed, and Robespierre in power. The young Englishman ranged through the city, passed by the prison where the king lay, visited the Tuilleries, lately stormed, and the Place de Carrousel, a month since heaped with dead. As he lay in the garret of a hotel hard by, sleepless, and filled with thoughts of what had just taken place, he seemed to hear a voice that cried aloud to the whole city, "Sleep no more!" Years after, those scenes still troubled him in dreams. He had ghastly visions of scaffolds with innocent victims on them, or of crowds ready for butchery, and mad with the levity of despair. In his sleep he seemed to be pleading in vain for the life of friends, or for his own, before a savage tribunal. A page of the "Prelude" is filled with the somewhat vague reflections that came to him as he lay sleepless in his garret. The most definite of these is, that a nation's destiny often hangs on the action of single persons, and that the bonds of one common humanity transcend those of country and race. These vague truisms Lockhart, glad no doubt to make the young republican poet look ridiculous, condenses into this: "He revolved in his mind how the crisis might be averted, and, taking the measure of himself and of the various factions, he came to the conclusion that he, William Wordsworth, was the proper person to rally the nation and conduct the revolution to a happy issue." What authority for this interpretation Lockhart had, except his wish to ridicule Wordsworth, it is not easy to guess. But just at this crisis, when the young poet, whatever line he had taken, was in eminent danger of falling along with his friends, the Brissotins, in the then impending massacre of May, he was forced—by what he then thought a "harsh necessity," but afterwards owned to be a "gracious Providence"—to return to England. Lockhart suggests that his friends at

home, becoming aware of the peril he was in, prudently recalled him by stopping the supplies.

Returning to England at the close of 1792, he spent some time in London in great unsettlement and mental perplexity. He was horrified with the excesses in which the Revolution had landed, yet not the less he clung to his republican faith, and his hope of the revolutionary cause. When at length Britain interposed, his indignation knew no bounds; this step, he said, was the first great shock his moral nature received. With an evil eye he watched, off the Isle of Wight, the fleet that was to transport our armies to the Continent,—heard of the disasters of our arms with joy, and of our success with bitterness. When every month brought tidings of fresh enormities in France, and opponents taunted him with these results of equality and popular government, he retorted that these were but the overflow of a reservoir of guilt, which had been filling up for centuries by the wrongdoings of kings and nobles. Soon France entered on a war of conquest, and he was doomed to see his last hopes of liberty betrayed. Still striving to hide the wounds of mortified presumption, he clung, as he tells us, more firmly than ever to his old tenets, while the friends of old institutions goaded him still further by their triumphant scorn. Overwhelmed with shame and despondency at the shipwreck of his golden dreams, he turned to probe the foundations on which all society rests. Not only institutions, customs, law, but even the grounds of moral obligation, and distinctions of right and wrong, disappeared. Demanding formal proof, and finding none, he abandoned moral questions in despair. This was the crisis of his malady.

The mental gloom into which he had fallen and the steps by which he won his way back to upper air are set forth in the concluding Books of the "Prelude" and are partly described in the character of the Solitary in the "Excursion." These self-descriptions, though somewhat vague, are yet well worth attention; for the light they throw on Wordsworth's own mental history, and as illustrating by what exceptional methods one of the greatest minds of that time was floated clear of the common wreck in which so many were entangled. His moral being had received such a shock that both as regards man and nature, he tried to close his heart against

the sources of his former strength. The whole past of history, he believed, was one great mistake, and the best hope for the human race was to cut itself off forever from all sympathy with it. Even the highest creations of the old poets lost their charm for him. They seemed to him mere products of passion and prejudice, wanting altogether in the nobility of reason. He tried by narrow syllogisms, he tells us, to unsoul those mysteries of being which have been through all ages the bonds of man's brotherhood. This is rather vague ; but perhaps we are not wrong in supposing it to mean that he grew sceptical of all those higher faiths which cannot be demonstrably proved. This moral state reacted on his feelings about the visible universe. It became to him less spiritual than it used to be. Turning on it the same microscopic, unimaginative eye which he had turned on the moral world, he learned, by an evil infection of the time, alien to his own nature, to compare scene with scene, to search for mere novelties of form and color, dead to the moral power and the sentiment that resides in each individual place. He fell for a time under a painful tyranny of the eye, that craves ever new combinations of form, uncounteracted by the reports of the other senses, uninformed by that finer influence that streams from the soul into the eye.

In this sickness of the heart, this "obscuration of the master vision," his sole sister Dorothy came, like his better angel, to his side. Convinced that his office on earth was to be a poet, not to break his heart against the hard problems of politics and philosophy, she led him away from perplexing theories and crowded cities into the open air of heaven. Together they visited, travelling on foot, many of the most interesting districts of their native England, and mingled freely with the country people and the poor. There, amid the freshness of nature, his fevered spirit was cooled down ; earth's "first diviner influence," returned ; he saw things again as he had seen them in boyhood. It was not merely that nature acted on his senses, and so restored his mind's health. His understanding saw in the processes of earth and sky, going on by steadfast laws, a visible image of right reason. His over-wrought feelings were cooled and soothed by the contemplation of objects in which there is no fever of passion, no im-

patience, no restless vanity. His imagination, dazzled erewhile with the whirl of wild and transitory projects, found here something to rest on that was enduring. This free intercourse with nature in time brought him back to his true self, so that he began to look on life and the framework of society with other eyes, and to seek there, too, for that which is permanent and intrinsically good. At this time, as he and his sister wandered about various out-of-the-way parts of England, where they were strangers, he found not delight only, but instruction, in conversing with all whom he met. The lonely roads were open schools to him. There as he entered into conversation with the poorest, often with the outcast and the forlorn, and heard from them their own histories, he got a new insight into human souls, discerned there a depth and a worth, where none appears to careless eyes. The perception of these things made him loathe the thought of those ambitious projects which had lately deceived him. He ceased to admire strength detached from moral purpose, and learned to prize unnoticed worth, the meek virtues and lowly charities. Settled judgments of right and wrong returned ; but they were essential, not conventional judgments. In his estimate of men he set no store by rank or station, little by those "formalities," which have been misnamed education ; for he seemed to himself to see utter hollowness in the talking, so-called intellectual world, and little good got by those who had held most intercourse with it. He now set himself to see whether a life of toil was necessarily one of ignorance ; whether goodness was a delicate plant requiring garden culture, and intellectual power a thing confined to those who call themselves educated men. And, as he mingled freely with all kinds of people, he found a pith of sense and a solidity of judgment here and there among the unlearned, which he had failed to find in the most lettered ; from obscure men he had heard high truths, words that struck in with his own best thoughts of what was fair and good. And love, true love and pure, he found was no flower reared only in what is called refined society, and requiring leisure and polished manners for its growth. Excessive labor and grinding poverty, he grants, by preoccupying the mind with sensual

wants, often crush the finer affections. And it is difficult for these to thrive in the over-crowded alleys of cities, where the human heart is sick, and the eye looks only on deformity. But in all circumstances, save the most abject, sometimes even in these, he had seen the soul triumphing over sensible things, the heart beating all the truer from living in contact with natural wants, and with the reality of things. In our talk of these things we mislead each other, and books mislead us still more,—books, which in that day more than now, being written mostly for the wealthy, put things in artificial light; lower the many for the pleasure of the few, magnifying the external differences and artificial barriers that separate man from man, and neglect the one human heart. In opposition to all this, he himself had found "love in huts where poor men lie," the finest bloom of the affections where the outward man was rude to look upon; under the humblest guise had seen souls that were sanctified by duty, patience, and sorrow:—

"Of these, said I, shall be my song; of these,  
If future years mature me for the task,  
Will I record the praises, making verse  
Deal boldly with substantial things. . . . My  
theme

No other than the very heart of man,  
As found among the best of those who live—  
Not unexalted by religious faith,  
Not uninformed by books, good books, though  
few—

In nature's presence: thence may I select  
Sorrow, that is not sorrow, but delight;  
And miserable love, that is not pain  
To think of, for the glory that redounds  
Therefrom to human kind, and what we are."

Then follows a passage, perhaps the most finely thought, most perfectly expressed in the whole "Prelude," in which he describes the different kinds of power, the different grades of nobleness, which he had found among the poor. It is too long to quote here; but those who care for these things will find it worth turning to.

His mind being thus restored to tone, and able to look once more on common life with love and imaginative delight, the visible world reassumed the splendor which it had worn for him in childhood, with that which only thought could have added,—a fuller consciousness of the sources of this beauty. His eye now looked on nature with the wonder of the world's childhood, informed with the reflectiveness of its mature age.

But here we must pause; for in this account of Wordsworth's unhinging and restoration, given almost in his own words, we have somewhat outrun the order of dates and places. This restoration, though summed up in the concluding books of the "Prelude," could not have taken place in a few months, but must have been the work of at least several years. Though this inward fermentation working itself to clearness was the most important, the broad question must, at the same time, have been tolerably urgent. To meet this, he had, as far as appears, simply nothing except what was allowed him by his friends. Of course, neither they nor he could long tolerate such a state of dependence. What, then, was to be done? Three or four courses were open to him,—the bar, taking orders, teaching private pupils, and writing for a London newspaper. All passed under his review, but to each and all he was nearly equally averse. It must have been at this time that he felt so keenly those forebodings, afterwards beautifully described in his poem of "Resolution and Independence," when the fate of Chatterton and Burns rose mournfully before him, and he asked himself,—

"How can he expect that others should  
Build for him, sow for him, and at his call  
Love him, who for himself will take no heed at  
all?"

In this juncture, the newspaper press, an effectual extinguisher to a possible poet, was ready to have absorbed him. He had actually written to a friend in London, who was supporting himself in this way, to find him like employment, when he was delivered from these importunities by a happy occurrence. In the close of the year 1794 and the beginning of 1795, he was engaged in attending at Penrith a friend, Raisley Calvert, who had fallen into a deep consumption. Calvert died early in 1795, and bequeathed to Wordsworth a legacy of £900. He had divined Wordsworth's genius, and believed that he would yet do great things. And indeed seldom has so small a sum produced larger results. It removed at once Wordsworth's anxiety about a profession, rescued him from the newspaper press, set him free to follow his true bent, and give free rein to the poetic power he felt working within him.

One of the first results of the legacy was to restore Wordsworth permanently to the shade, sunset and moonlight, shed over a fa-

met whenever occasion offered, they had not been able to set up house together; but now this was no longer impossible. And surely never did sister a more delicate service for a brother than she at this time did. De Quincey has given a full and engaging portrait of that lady, as she appeared some years later than this, but still in her fervid prime, when he first made acquaintance with her brother's family at Grasmere. He describes her as of "warm, even ardent manner," now bursting into strong expression, now checked by decorous self-restraint, of profound sensibility to all things beautiful, with quick sympathy and deep impressibility for all he said or quoted, seemingly inwardly consumed by "a subtile fire of impassioned intellect." And yet withal, so little of a literary lady, so entirely removed from being blue-stocking, that she was ignorant of many books and subjects which to most educated persons, are quite commonplace. Such she was when De Quincey first saw her, more than ten years after the brother and sister began to live together. We have seen how, when Wordsworth returned from France, depressed with shame and despondency for his shipwrecked hopes, she turned him from dark and harassing thoughts, and brought him into contact with the healing powers of nature. In many places of his works the poet has borne thankful testimony to all she did for him. At this time, he tells us, it was she who maintained for him a saving intercourse with his true self, opened for him the obstructed passage between head and heart, whence in time came genuine self-knowledge and peace. Again, he says that his imagination was by nature too masculine, austere, even harsh; he loved only the sublime and terrible, was blind to the milder graces of landscape and of character. She it was who softened and humanized him, opened his eye to the more hidden beauties, his heart to the gentler affections:—

"She gave me eyes, she gave me ears,  
And humble cares, and delicate fears;  
A heart, the fountain of sweet tears,  
And love and thought and joy."

If there were no other records of her than those brief extracts from her journal during the Highland tour, which stand at the head of several of her brother's poems, these alone would prove her possessed of a large portion of his genius. Larger extracts from them occur in the post's biography and in the edition of

the Poems of 1857, and often they seem nearly as good as the poems which they introduce. Might not that wonderful journal, even yet, be given entire, or nearly so, to the world?

It was in the autumn of 1795, at Racedown in Dorsetshire, that the brother and sister, on the strength of the nine hundred pounds, set up house together. It was the first home of their own, and for this, Wordsworth always looked back to it with love. So retired was the place that the post came only once a week. But the two read Italian together, gardened, and walked on the meadows on the tops of the combs. These for recreation. For serious work, Wordsworth fell first to writing *Imitations of Juvenal*, in which he assailed fiercely the vices of the time; but these he never published. Then he wrote in the Spenserian stanza the poem of "Guilt and Sorrow," not published till long afterwards, but in which there is more of his real self than in anything he had yet done. Then followed his tragedy. "The Borderers," which all, even his greatest admirers, feel to be a failure. Besides, there were one or two shorter poems, in his matured manner, such as the "Cumberland Beggar," which was written partly here, partly at Alfoxden. So many trials had Wordsworth to make, "The Evening Walk," the "Descriptive Sketches," *Imitations of Juvenal*, "The Borderers," before he found out his true strength and his proper style. But more important than any poetry composed at Racedown was his first meeting there with S. T. Coleridge. Perhaps no two such men have met anywhere on English ground during this century. Coleridge when at Cambridge had read the "Descriptive Sketches," and finding in them something he had never found in poetry before, longed to know their author. Since leaving Cambridge, though two years and a half younger than Wordsworth, he had gone through half a lifetime of adventure, had served as a private in a cavalry regiment, been an enthusiast for the French Revolution, had tried to emigrate with Southey, and found a Pantisocracy on the banks of the Susquehanna, been stopped by want of funds, then turned Unitarian preacher, and was now a young poet and philosopher on the loose. Miss Wordsworth describes him as he looked on his first visit to Racedown. For the first three minutes he seemed plain: "Thin and pale, the lower part of the face not good, wide

mouth, thick lips, not very good teeth, longish, loose, half-curling, rough, black hair," a contrast to Wordsworth at this time, with his fine light-brown hair and beautiful teeth. But the moment Coleridge began to speak, you thought no more of these defects. You saw him as his friend afterward described him—

"The rapt one of the godlike forehead,  
The heaven-eyed creature."

Or, as he elsewhere more fully portrayed him—

"A noticeable man with large gray eyes,  
And a pale face that seemed undoubtedly  
As if a blooming face it ought to be;  
Heavy his low-hung lip did oft appear  
Depressed by weight of brooding fantasy;  
Profound his forehead was, though not severe."

During this visit Wordsworth read aloud to Coleridge nearly twelve hundred lines of blank verse, "superior," says Coleridge, "to anything in our language." This was probably the story of Margaret, or "The Ruined Cottage," which now stands at the opening of "The Excursion," and certainly, in blank verse, Wordsworth never surpassed that. When they parted, Coleridge says, "I felt myself a small man beside Wordsworth;" while of Coleridge, Wordsworth, certainly not given to over-estimate other men, said, "I have known many men who have done wonderful things; but the only wonderful man I ever knew was Coleridge." Their first intercourse had ripened into friendship, and they longed to see more of each other. As Coleridge was at this time living at the village of Nether Stowey in Somersetshire, the Wordsworths removed in the autumn 1797 to the country-house of Alfoxden, in the immediate neighborhood. The time he spent at Alfoxden was one of the most delightful of Wordsworth's life. The two young men were then one in their poetic tastes and principles, one, too, in political and social views and each admired the other more than he did any other living man. In outward circumstances, too, they were alike: both poor in money but rich in thought and imagination, both in the prime of youth, and boundless in hopeful energy. That summer as they wandered aloft on the airy ridge of Quantock, or dived down its sylvan combs, what high talk they must have held! Theirs was the age for boundless, endless, unwearied talk on all things human and divine. Hazlitt has said of Coleridge in his youth, that he seemed as if he would talk on forever, and you wished him

to talk on forever. With him, as his youth, so was his age. But most men, as life wears on, having found that all their many and vehement talkings have served no lasting end of the soul, grow more brief and taciturn. Long after, Wordsworth speaks of this as a very pleasant and productive time. The poetic well-head, now fairly unsealed, was flowing freely. Many of the shorter poems were then composed from the scenery that was before his eyes, and from incidents there seen or heard. Among the most characteristic of these, were "We are Seven," "The Mad Mother," "The last of the Flock," "Simon Lee," "Expostulation and Reply," "The Tables Turned," "Lines to his Sister," beginning "It is the first mild day of March," "Lines in Early Spring," beginning "I heard a thousand blended notes," the last containing these words, which give the key-note to Wordsworth's feeling about nature at this time—

"And 'tis my faith that every flower  
Enjoys the air it breathes."

If any one will read over the short poems above named, they will let him see further into Wordsworth's mood during this, the fresh germinating springtime of his genius, than any words of ours can. The occasion of their making a joint literary venture was curious. Coleridge, Wordsworth, and his sister wished to make a short walking tour, for which five pounds were needed, but were not forthcoming. To supply this want they agreed to make a joint-poem, and send it to some magazine which would give the required sum. Accordingly, one evening as they trudged along the Quantock Hills, they planned "The Ancient Mariner," founded on a dream which a friend of Coleridge had dreamed. Coleridge supplied most of the incidents, and almost all the lines. Wordsworth contributed the incident of the shooting of the albatross, with a line here and there. "The Ancient Mariner" soon grew, till it was beyond the desired five pounds' worth; so they thought of a joint volume. Coleridge was to take supernatural subjects, or romantic, and invest them with a human interest and resemblance of truth. Wordsworth was to take common every-day incidents, and by faithful adherence to nature, and true but modifying colors of imagination, was to shed over common aspects of earth and facts of life such a charm as light and shade, sunset and moonlight, shed over a fa-

miliar landscape. Wordsworth was so much the more industrious of the two that he had completed enough for a volume when Coleridge had only finished the "Ancient Mariner," and begun "Christabel" and the "Dark Ladie." Cottle, a Bristol bookseller, was summoned from Bristol to arrange for the publication, and he has left a gossipy but amusing account of his intercourse with the two poets at this time, and his visit to Alfoxden. He agreed to give Wordsworth £30 for the twenty-two pieces of his, which made up the first volume of the "Lyrical Ballads," while for "the Rime of the Ancient Marinere," which was to head the volume, he made a separate bargain with Coleridge. This volume, which appeared in the autumn of 1798, was the first which made Wordsworth known to the world as a poet; for the "Descriptive Sketches" had almost escaped notice. Of the ballads or shorter poems, which, as we have seen, were mostly composed at Alfoxden, and which reflect the feelings and incidents of his life there, we shall reserve what we have to say for a more general survey. The volume closes with one poem in another style, in which the poet speaks out his inmost feelings, and in his own "grand style." This is the poem on Tintern Abbey, composed during a walking-tour on the Wye with his sister, just before leaving Alfoxden for the Continent. Read these lines over once again, however well you may know them. Bear in mind what has been told of the way his childhood and boyhood had passed, living in the eye of nature, the separation that followed from his favorite haunts and ways, the wild fermentation of thought, the moral tempest he had gone through, the return to nature's places, and to common life and peaceful thoughts, with intellect and heart deepened, expanded, humanized, by having long brooded over the ever-recurring questions of man's nature, his true aims, and his final destiny; bear these things in mind, and, as you read, every line of that masterpiece will come out with deeper meaning and in exacter outline. And then the concluding lines in which the poet turns to his sister, his fellow-traveller, with "the shooting lights in those wild eyes," in which he caught "gleams of past existence"—

"If solitude, or fear, or pain, or grief,  
Should be thy portion."

What prophetic pathos do these words assume when we remember how long and mournfully ere the end of her life those wild eyes were darkened!

Before the volume appeared, Wordsworth and his sister had left Alfoxden and sailed with Coleridge for Germany. It has been said that the reason for their leaving Somersetshire was their falling under suspicion as hatchers of sedition. A government spy, with a peculiarly long nose, was sent down to watch them. Coleridge tells an absurd story, how, as they lay on the Quantock hills conversing about Spinoza, the spy, as he skulked behind a bank, overheard their talk, and thought they were talking of himself under the nickname of "Spy-nosey." Coleridge was believed to have little harm in him, for he was a crack-brained, talking fellow: but that Wordsworth is either a smuggler or a traitor, and means mischief. He never speaks to any one, haunts lonely places, walks by moonlight, and is always "*boozing* about" by himself. Such was the country talk; and the result of it was, the agent for the owner of Alfoxden refused to re-let the house to so suspicious a character. So the three determined to pack up, and winter on the Continent. At Hamburg, however, they parted company. Their ostensible purpose was to learn German; but Wordsworth and his sister did little at this. He spent the winter of 1798-99, the coldest of the century, in Goslar, and there by the German charcoal-burners, the poet's mind reverted to Esthwaite and Westmoreland hills, and struck out a number of poems in his finest vein. "She dwelt among the untrodden ways," "Lucy," or "Three years she grew in sun and shower," "Ruth," "The Poet's Epitaph," "Nutting," "The Two April Mornings," "The Fountain," "Matthew," are all products of this winter. So Wordsworth missed German, and gave the world instead immortal poems. Coleridge went alone to Göttingen, learned German, dived for the rest of his life deep into transcendental metaphysics, and the world got no more "Ancient Mariners."

In the spring of 1799, Wordsworth and his sister set forth from Goslar on their return to England. As they left that city behind, and felt the spring breeze fan their cheeks, Wordsworth poured forth that joyful strain with which the "Prelude" opens. Arrived in their native land, they passed

most of the remainder of the year with their kindred, the Hutchisons, at Sockburn-on-Tees, occasionally travelling into the neighboring dales and fells of Yorkshire. In September, Wordsworth took Coleridge, who also had returned from abroad, and had seen but few mountains in his life, on a walking-tour to show him the hills and lakes of native Westmoreland. "Haweswater," Coleridge writes, "kept his eyes dim with tears, but he received the deepest delight from the divine sisters, Rydal and Grasmere." It was then that Wordsworth saw the small house at the Town end of Grasmere, which he and his sister soon after fixed on as their home. From Sockburn-on-Tees these two set forth a little before the shortest day, and walked on foot over the bleak fells that form the watershed of Yorkshire and Westmoreland. As side by side they paced the long dales, and set their faces to the Hamilton hills, the ground was frozen hard under their feet, and the snow-showers were driving against them. Yet they enjoyed the snow-showers, turned aside to see the frozen waterfalls, and stopped to watch the changing drapery of cloud, sunshine, and snow-drift as it coursed the hills. At night they stopped in cottages or small wayside inns, and there, by the kitchen-fire, Wordsworth gave words to the thoughts that had occurred to him during the day. A great part of "Heartleap Well" was composed during one of these evenings, from a tradition he had heard that day from a native. They reached Grasmere on the shortest day, and settled in the small two-storied cottage, which had formerly been a public-house, with the sign of the Dove and the Olive Bough, but was henceforth to be identified with Wordsworth's poetic prime. The mode of life on which they were entering was one which their friends, no doubt, and most sensible people, called a mad project. With barely a hundred pounds a year between them, they were turning their back on the world, cutting themselves off from professions, chances of getting on, society, and settling themselves down in an out-of-the-way corner, with no employment but verse-making, no neighbors but unlettered rustics. When a man makes such a choice, he has need to look well what he does, and to be sure that he can go through with his purpose. In the world's eyes, nothing but success will justify such a recusant, and yet the world

will not be too ready to grant that success has been attained. But Wordsworth, besides a prophet-like devotion to the truths he saw, had a prudence, self-denial, and perseverance, rare among the sons of song. To himself may be applied the words he uses in a letter to Sir George Beaumont, when speaking of another subject than poetry: "It is such an animating sight to see a man of genius, regardless of temporary gains, whether of money or praise, fixing his attention solely upon what is interesting and permanent, and finding his happiness in an entire devotion of himself to such pursuits as shall most ennoble human nature. We have not yet seen enough of this in modern times." He himself showed this sight, if any man of his age did. Plain living and high thinking were not only praised in verse, but acted out by him and his sister in that cottage home. This century was ushered in by a long storm, which blocked up the roads for months, and kept them much indoors. This put their tempers to the proof; but they stood the test. Spring weather set them free, and brought to them a much-loved sailor brother, John, who was captain of an Indiaman. In their frugal housekeeping the sister, it may be believed, had much to do indoors; but she was always ready, both then and years after, to accompany her brother in his mountain walks. Those who may wish to know more of their abode and way of life will find an interesting sketch of these given by De Quincey, as he saw them seven years later. There was one small room, containing their few books, which was called, by courtesy, the library. But Wordsworth was no reader: the English poets and ancient history were the only two subjects he was really well read in. He tells a friend that he had not spent five shillings on new books in as many years, and of the few old ones which made up his collection, he had not read one-fifth. As for his study, that was in the open air. "By the side of the brook that runs through Easedale," he says, "I have composed thousands of verses!"—

"He murmurs near the running brooks  
A music sweeter than their own."

Another favorite resort for composition at this time was the tall fir-wood on the hill-side above the old road leading from Grasmere to Rydal. Society they found in the families of the "statesmen" all about; for

Grasmere was then, like most of the neighboring dales, portioned out among small but independent peasant lairds, whose forefathers had for ages lived and died on the same farms. With these men Wordsworth and his sister lived on terms of kindness and equal hospitality. He would receive them to tea in his home, or would go to sup in theirs. If the invitation was to some homestead in a distant vale, the ladies would travel in a cart, the poet walking by its side. Among these men, in their pastoral republic, the life was one of industry not too laborious; the manners were simple, manly, and severe. The statesmen looked after the sheep, grew hay on their own land in the valley, and each could turn out as many sheep to feed on the fell or common (as they call it) during the summer months, as they could provide hay for in the winter. Their chief source of income was the wool from the flock, and this not sold in the fleece, but spun into thread by the wives and daughters. These, with their spinning-wheels, were in high esteem; for they did more to maintain the house than the spade or plough of the husbands. Wordsworth loved this manner of life, not only because he had been familiar with it from childhood; but also for that he knew what sterling worth and pure domestic virtues sheltered under these roofs. But he lived to see it rudely broken up. Machinery put out the spinning-wheel, and the statesmen's lands passed for the most part into other hands.

The few statesmen's families who survived in and around Grasmere retained an affectionate and reverent remembrance of the "pawet," as they called him in their Westmoreland dialect, long after he had left them for Rydal Mount. Many stories we have heard them tell of his ways, while living at the Town-end,—how, alone, or oftener with his sister, at night-fall, when other people were going to bed, he would be seen going forth to walk to Dunmailraise, or climbing that outlying ridge of Fairfield, which overhangs the forest-side of Grasmere, there to be alone with the stars till near the breaking of the day. When in their houses strangers have read aloud, or told in their own words, some of his shorter poems descriptive of incident and character, or the two books of the "Excursion," which describe the tenants of the churchyard among the mountains, we have heard old residents name many of the per-

sons there alluded to, and go on to give more details of their lives.

The first months at Grasmere were so industriously employed that sometime in the year 1800, when a second edition of the first volume of "Lyrical Ballads" was being reprinted, he added to it a new volume containing thirty-seven new pieces. Among these were the poems already mentioned, as having been composed during the German winter, as well as some new ones which had been suggested since he settled at Grasmere. Such were the "Idle Shepherd Boys," "Poems on the Naming of Places," "The Brothers," "Michael," which all are redolent of the Westmoreland fells. These two volumes cannot be said to have failed, for they were reprinted in 1802, and again in 1805; and in 1807, Jeffrey, even when inveighing against a new and better volume of poems, speaks of the "'Lyrical Ballads' as unquestionably popular." We shall not, however, stay to comment on their contents, till we have done with narrative. Only a few facts stand out prominently from the happy and industrious tenor of the life at Grasmere. In 1802, that Earl of Lonsdale, who to the last refused to pay to the Wordsworths their due, died, and was succeeded by a better-minded kinsman, who paid to them the original debt of £5,000 due to their father, with £3,500 of interest. This was divided into five shares, of which two went to the poet and his sister. This addition to his income enabled the poet to take to himself a wife, his cousin, and the intimate friend of his sister, Mary Hutchison, whom he had long known and loved. It is she whom he describes in his exquisite lines—

"A creature not too bright or good  
For human nature's daily food ;  
A perfect woman, nobly planned,  
To warm, to comfort, and command ;  
And yet a spirit still and bright,  
With something of an angel light."

They lived together in as great happiness as is allowed to human beings till the poet had fulfilled his fourscore years, when she survived him a few years longer.

In the August of 1803, Mrs. Wordsworth having been kept at home by domestic duties, Wordsworth and his sister set out from Keswick with Coleridge on that memorable tour in Scotland. They travelled a great part of the way on foot, up Nithsdale, and so on toward the Highland. Coleridge turned back soon after they had reached Loch Lomond,

being either lazy or out of spirits. Everywhere, as they trudged along, they saw the old familiar Highland sights, as if none had ever seen them before; and wherever they moved among the mountains, they left footprints of immortal beauty. He expressed what he saw in verse, she in prose, and it is hard to say which is the most poetic. Of all that has been, or may yet be, said or sung about the Highlands, what words can ever equal those entries in her journal? what poems can ever catch the soul of things like the "Address to Kilchurn Castle," "Glenalmain," "Stepping Westward," and the "Solitary Reaper"? The last of these, perhaps the most perfect of Wordsworth's poems, must have been suggested as they walked somewhere in the region about Loch Voil, between the braes of Balquhidder and Strathire. What was the name of her who suggested it, and where is she now? Who can tell? But whether she is still alive in extreme old age, or long since laid in her grave, in that poem she will sing on forever in eternal youth, to delight generations yet unborn.

In the beginning of 1805, the first great sorrow fell on Wordsworth's home, in the loss of his brother, Captain Wordsworth. He was leaving England, intending to make his last voyage, when his ship was run on the shambles of the Bill of Portland by the carelessness of a pilot, and he with the larger part of his crew went down. For long, Wordsworth was almost inconsolable, he so loved and honored his brother. His letters at this time, and his poems long after, are darkened with this grief. In one of these letters this striking thought occurs: "Why have we sympathies that make the best of us so afraid of inflicting pain and sorrow, which yet we see dealt about so lavishly by the Supreme Governor? Why should our notions of right toward each other, and to all sentient beings within our influence, differ so widely from what appears to be his notion and rule, if everything were to end here?" Captain Wordsworth had greatly admired his brother's poetry, but saw that it would take time to become popular, and would probably never be lucrative. So he would work for the family at Town-end, he said, and William would do something for the world. "This is the end of his part of the agreement," says the poet; "God grant me life and strength to fulfil mine!"

In 1807, Wordsworth came out with two more volumes of poetry, for the most part produced at Grasmere. He was now in his thirty-seventh year, so that these volumes may be said to close the springtime of his genius, and to be its consummate flower. Some of his after works may have equalled these, and may even show an increased moral depth, and religious tenderness. But there is about the best of the Grasmere poems an ethereal ideality, which he perhaps never afterwards reached. Besides the Scottish poems already noticed, there were the earliest instalment of sonnets, some of them the best he ever wrote, as that "London seen from Westminster Bridge;" "It is a beauteous Evening, calm and free;" "The World is too much with us;" "Toussaint L'Ouverture;" "Milton, thou shouldst be living."

These volumes contain also "The Song of Brougham Castle;" Resolution and Independence;" the poem to the cuckoo, beginning, "O blithe new-comer;" elegiac stanzas suggested by the picture of Peele Castle; and last, and chief of all, the "Ode on Intimations of Immortality." The three last-named especially have that indescribable, unapproachable ideality which we have spoken of as the characteristic of his best poems at this time. Indeed, the "Ode on Immortality" marks the highest limit which poetic inspiration has reached in England within this century, or indeed since the days of Milton. We have now traced the life of Wordsworth till he had reached his mature manhood. To this subject, therefore, we shall hardly again return, but shall give what space remains to a survey of his poetry.

The above account has been extracted mainly from "The Prelude," and is meant to throw light on the aim and spirit of his poetry. If a discriminating mental history of the poet could be given, followed by an edition of his works, in which the several poems were arranged, not in the present arbitrary manner, but chronologically according to the date of their composition, this would form the best of all commentaries. There were three epochs in Wordsworth's poetry, though these shade so insensibly the one into the other that any attempt exactly to define them must be somewhat arbitrary. What we have already called the springtime of his genius would each from his first settling at Racedown,

or, at any rate, his going to Alfoxden in 1797, till his leaving Grasmere Town-end in 1808. The second epoch, or full mid-summer of his poetry, would include his time at Allan Bank and his first years at Rydal Mount, as far as 1818 or 1820. This was the time when "The Excursion," "The White Doe of Rylstone," and the "Duddon Sonnets" were composed. The third epoch, or the sober autumn, reaching from about 1820 till he ceased from the work of composition, is the time of the ecclesiastical and other sonnets, of "Yarrow Revisited," and the Scottish poems of 1833; and lastly, of the memorials of his Italian tour in 1837.

But to return to the poems of the first epoch. It was the two volumes of 1807, those which, as we have seen, contained the very prime ore of his genius, that called forth Jeffrey's well-known vituperation. The unfairness of that review lay in this, that the weak parts of the book were brought out in strong relief, while the best were thrown as far as possible into the background. Over "the unfortunate Alice Fell," as it has been called, the critic makes himself merry, and by extracting a number of homely matter-of-fact lines and stanzas, which occur here and there in the other poems, he makes out what must have seemed to careless readers a telling case. But his verdict on the very best—those which all the world has since acknowledged—prove that to the Edinburgh law-giver on matters of taste, true poetic excellence was as a picture to a blind man's eye. "Yarrow Unvisited" he calls a very tedious, affected performance. After quoting from and redescribing "Resolution and Independence," he thus concludes: "We defy the bitterest enemy of Mr. Wordsworth to produce anything at all parallel to this from any collection of English poetry, or even from the specimens of his friend Mr. Southey." In the same strain he quotes from the "Ode to the Cuckoo," in which he thinks that the author, striving after force and originality, produces nothing but absurdity. Lastly, the "Ode on Immortality" is "the most illegible and unintelligible part of the publication." The only parts of the two volumes quoted with approbation are the Brougham song and three sonnets. These facts we have alluded to, not from a wish to disinter long-since buried strifes, but because the allusion to them is

necessary to bring out the true force of Wordsworth both as a man and a poet. The result of this review was to stop the sale of his works for a number of years. But whoever else might be snuffed out by a severe review, Wordsworth was not to be. To a friend who wrote, condoling with him on the severity of the criticism,—and it must be remembered that in those days the verdict of the *Edinburgh* was all but omnipotent,—he replied, "Trouble not yourself about their present reception ; of what moment is that compared with what I trust is their destiny ? To console the afflicted ; to add sunshine to daylight. by making the happy happier ; to teach the young and gracious of every age to see, to think, and feel, and therefore to become more actively and securely virtuous ;—this is their office, which I trust they will faithfully perform, long after we (that is, all that is mortal of us) are mouldering in our graves." Again : "I doubt not that you will share with me an invincible confidence that my writings (and among them these little poems) will coöperate with the benign tendencies in human nature and society, wherever found, and that they will, in their degree, be efficacious in making men wiser, better, and happier." This language is not vanity, but the calm confidence of a man who feels the rock under his foot, knows that he is in harmony with the everlasting truth of things. In the issue between the critic and the poet, the world, long before his death, sided with the latter, and will continue on his side. It is instructive, however, to observe what a change in his feelings about posthumous fame thirty years made. In 1837, he thus writes to another correspondent : "I am standing on the brink of that vast ocean I must sail so soon ; I must speedily lose sight of the shore ; and I could not once have conceived how little I now am troubled by the thought of how long or how short a time they who remain on that shore may have sight of me."

What, then, is there in these poems which there is not in any other ? What is their peculiar virtue ? To seize and set forth in words the heart of anything with which we have been long familiar is not easy ; nevertheless, something of this kind, however imperfectly, must now be attempted. In the opening of the "Prelude," Wordsworth tells us that when he first seriously thought of being a poet, he looked into himself to see how he

was fitted for the work, and seemed to find there "that first great gift, the vital soul." In this self-estimate he did not err. The vital soul, it is a great gift, which, if ever it dwelt in man, dwelt in Wordsworth. Not the intellect merely, nor the heart, nor the imagination, nor the conscience, not any of these alone, but all of them condensed into one, and moving all altogether. In virtue of this vital soul, whatever he did see he saw to the very core. He did not fumble with the outside or the accidents of the thing, but his eye went at once to the quick,—rested on its essential life.

He saw what was there, but had escaped all other eyes. He did not import into the outward world transient fancies or feelings of his own, the pathetic fallacy, as it has been named ; but he saw it, as it exists in itself, or perhaps rather as it exists in its permanent moral relations to the human spirit.

Again, this soul within him did not work with effort ; no painful groping, or grasping. It was as vital in its receptivity as in its active energy. It could lie long in a "wise passiveness," drawing the things of earth and sky and of human life into itself, as the calm, clear lake does the imagery of the clouds and surrounding hills :—

"Think not, 'mid all this mighty sum  
Of things forever speaking,  
That nothing in itself will come,  
But we must still be seeking."

Those early spring poems at Alfoxden, from which these lines are taken, specially express what we mean,—the wonderful interchange that went on between him and all the things about him, they flowing into him, he going out into them. His soul attracted them to itself, as a mountain-top does the clouds, and at their touch woke up to feel its kinship with the mysterious life that is in nature, and in each separate natural object. This is the cardinal work of the imagination, to possess itself of the life of whatever thing it deals with. In the extent to which he did this, and the truthfulness with which he did it, lies Wordsworth's supreme power.

Hence we may observe that all genuine imagination is essentially truthful, and the purer it is, the more truthful. The reports it brings in, so far from being mere fancies, are the finest, most hidden truths. In Wordsworth, the higher his inspiration rises, the more penetrating is his truthfulness. What

may be the relation between the truths which imagination reveals and those which are the result of scientific discovery, we cannot pretend to determine. It would be a fine inquiry for one who can to work out. But every one must feel that

"The moon doth with delight

Look round her when the heavens are bare," gives the essence of a clear moonlight sky more truthfully in its relation to the human spirit than any meteorologist can do. What words, poetic or scientific, will ever render the mountain stillness like these few plain ones ?—

"The sleep that is among the lonely hills," or the impression made by a solitary western peak, like—

"There is an eminence of these our hills,  
The last that parleys with the setting sun."

It is this rendering of the inner truth of things which Mr. Arnold has happily called the interpretative power of poetry. This must be that which Wordsworth himself means when, in his preface, he says that "poetry is the breath and finer spirit of all knowledge ; it is the impassioned expression which is in the countenance of all science." And it is "the vital soul" in the poet which penetrates into this, and reads it off for other men. This, too, is what is meant when we find it said in the "Prelude" that imagination, in its highest use, is but another name for "absolute power, clearest insight, reason in her most exalted mood ;" and that this imagination, exercised on outward nature and on human life, is the parent of love, or feeling intellect. This language will, no doubt, to some, sound mystical. But it is the language of one who possessed that which he spoke of in larger mass, and of finer quality, than any Englishman since Shakspeare and Milton. It is the presence of this power in Wordsworth which is the source of that indescribable charm which many have felt in his poetry, and have found in none other before or since. They were brought by it for a moment soul to soul with truth, caught as they read, a glimpse into the life of things such as no other poet of these days has given them. This clearness of vision, rare at all times, becomes much rarer as the ages go on. The naming era, when men could still give names to things, is long past, and with disuse the faculty has died out. Under heaps of words, which we receive

without effort, dead metaphors, fossils of extinct poetic acts, the moulding power of imagination lies buried. And not only language has got stiff and hardened, but society has become complicated in a thousand ways; phrases, custom, conventionality, doubts, disputes, lie many layers thick above every newborn soul. The revolutionary age into which Wordsworth was born may have made some rents in these, and let the basement of truth be here and there seen through. But yet, even with this help, what power must have dwelt in that quiet eye to put all these obstructions aside, and see things anew for itself, as if no one had ever looked on them before !

This power manifests itself in Wordsworth especially in two directions, as it is turned on nature, and as it is turned on man. Let us, for clearness' sake, examine them separately, though in reality they often blend. Between Wordsworth's imagination, however, as it works in the one direction and in the other, there is this difference. In dealing with nature, it has no limit; it is as wide as the world; as much at home when gazing on the little celandine as when moving with the vast and multitudinous forces of earth and heaven. In human life and character his range is narrower, whether these limitations came from within, or were self-imposed. His sympathies embrace by no means all human things, but within the range which they do embrace, his eye is no less penetrating and true. About nature, it has become so much the fashion to rave, there has been so much counterfeit enthusiasm, that one almost dreads speaking on it. But whatever it may be to most men, there can be no doubt that free nature, mountain solitudes, were as essential to Wordsworth's heart as the air to his lungs. About this, nothing he has said goes beyond the simple truth. Of his manner of dealing with it in his poetry, the following things may be noted :—

*First*, When he would place some particular landscape before the reader, he does not heap upon exhaustive enumeration of details. Only one or two of the most essential features faithfully given, and then from these he passes at once to the sentiment, the genius of the place, that which gives it individuality, and makes it this and no other place. Numerous instances of the way in which he seizes the inner spirit of a place and utters it, will occur to every reader. To give

one out of many, after sketching briefly the outward appearance of the four fraternal yew-trees of Borrowdale, who else could have condensed the total impressions in such lines as these, so intensely imaginative, so profoundly true!—

“ Beneath whose sable roof  
Of boughs, as if for festal purpose, decked  
With unrejoicing berries—ghostly Shapes  
May meet at noon tide; Fear and trembling Hope,  
Silence and Foresight ; Death the Skeleton  
And Time the Shadow ; there to celebrate,  
As in a natural temple scattered o'er  
With altars undisturbed of mossy stone,  
United worship ; or in mute repose  
To lie, and listen to the mountain flood  
Murmuring from Glaramara's inmost caves.”

*Secondly*, When in this passage, or in that wonderful poem, “ What, are you stepping westward ? ” and many more, we find the poet spiritualizing so powerfully the familiar appearances and common facts of earth, adding, as he himself says—

“ The gleam,  
The light that never was, on sea or land,  
The consecration, and the Poet's dream ; ”

we are tempted to ask, Is this true? is the light real, or only fantastic? Now in this we conceive lies Wordsworth's transcendent power, that the ideal light he sheds is a true light, and the more ideal it is, the more true.

Poets, all but the greatest, adorn things with fantastic or individual hues, to suffuse them with their own temporary emotions, which Mr. Ruskin has called the pathetic fallacy. The ideal light which Wordsworth sheds does not so, but brings out only more vividly the real heart of nature, the inmost feeling, which is really there, and is recognized by Wordsworth's eye in virtue of the kinship between nature and his soul. If it be asked how is this, we can but reply that there is a wonderful and mysterious adaptation between the external world and the human soul, the one answering to the other in ways not yet explained by any philosopher.

*Thirdly*, Whereas to most men the material world is a heavy, gross, dead mass, earth a ball of black mud, painted here and there with some color, Wordsworth felt it to be a living, breathing power, not dead, but full of strange life; his eye almost saw into it, as if it were transparent. So strongly did this feeling possess him, that in childhood he was a complete idealist. Speaking of himself at that age, he says, “ I was often un-

able to think of external things as having external existence, and I communed with all I saw as something, not apart from, but inherent, in my own immaterial nature. Many times while going to school have I grasped at a wall or tree to recall myself from the abyss of idealism to the reality. At that time I was afraid of such processes. In later periods of life I have deplored, as we have all reason to do, a subjugation of an opposite character, and have rejoiced over these remembrances." Here is idealism, far beyond that of Berkeley or any other philosopher, engendered, not by subtle arguments of metaphysics, but born from within by sheer force of soul, before which the solid mass of earth is transfigured, or disappears. Out of moods like these, or rather the remembrance of them, are projected some of his most ideal lights, such as form the charm of his finest poems, like the lines to the "Cuckoo," and the "Ode on Immortality." Hence came the

" Absolute questionings  
Of sense and outward things,  
Fallings from us, vanishing,"

which he looked back to with thankfulness and joy in mature manhood. With these abstract and visionary feelings, there blended more tender human remembrances of that early time, making together a beautiful light of morning about his after days, and touching even the common things of life with an affecting, tender solemnity.

*Fourthly,* With this spiritualizing power of soul, Wordsworth combined another faculty, which might seem the most opposed to it,—wonderful keenness and faithfulness of eye for the external facts of nature. Seldom in his library, much in the open air, at all hours, in all seasons, from childhood to old age, his watchful, observant eye had stored his mind with all the varied aspects of nature. His imagination was a treasure-house whence he drew forth things new and old, the old as fresh as if new. No modern poet has recorded so large and so varied a number of natural facts and appearances, which had never before been set down in books. And these he brings forth, not as if he had noted, and carefully photographed them, to reproduce them whenever an occasion offered, but as a familiar knowledge that had come to him unawares, and recurred with the naturalness of an instinct. Many, no doubt, had seen, but who before him had so described the hare?—

" The grass is bright with raindrops ; on the moors

The hare is running races in her mirth ;  
And with her feet she from the plashy earth  
Raises a mist ; that, glittering in the sun,  
Runs with her all the way, wherever she doth run."

Or again, who else would have noted the effect of a leaping trout, or of a croaking raven, in bringing out the solitariness of a mountain tarn?—

" There sometimes doth a leaping fish  
Send through the tarn a lonely cheer ;  
The crags repeat the raven's croak  
In sympathy austere."

Or again, in the calm bright evening after a stormy day,—

" Loud is the vale ! the voice is up  
With which she speaks when storms are gone,  
A mighty union of streams !  
Of all her voices, one !

" Loud is the vale—this inland depth  
In peace is roaring like a sea ;  
Yon star upon the mountain-top  
Is listening quietly."

Who but Wordsworth would have set off the uproar of the vale by this glance at the star on the mountain-head ! Here, in passing, we may note the strange power there is in his simple prepositions. The star is *on* the mountain-top ; the silence is *in* the starry sky ; the sleep is *among* the hills ; the gentleness of heaven is *on* the sea, not " broods o'er," as the later editions have it. This double gift of soul and eye, highest ideality and most literal realism combined, have made him of all modern poets nature's most unerring interpreter.

*Fifthly,* Hence it comes that all the moods and outgoings of nature are alike open to him ; every kind of country renders up to him its secret. He is alike true, whether in describing the boundless flats of Salisbury Plain, combs and dells of western Somersetshire, fells and lakes of native Cumberland, Yorkshire moors and dales, wilder glens of our own Highlands, or the pastoral quiet of the Border hills. Who but he could have gathered up the whole feeling of Yarrow into that consummate stanza " Meek Loneliness," etc., etc. ?

If there is preëminence in any one department, it is in the interpretation of his own mountains. This is so altogether adequate and profound that it has often seemed as if those dumb old solitudes had, after slumbering since the beginning of time, at last waked to consciousness in him, and ut-

tered their inmost heart through his voice. No other mountains have ever had their soul so perfectly expressed. Philosophers have dreamed that nature and the human soul are the two limbs of a double-clefted tree, springing from, and united in, one root; that nature is unconscious soul, and the soul is nature become conscious of itself. Some such view as this, if it were true, might account for the marvellous sympathy there is between Wordsworth's poetry and the feeling of his own mountains, and for his power of rendering their mute being into his solemn melodies.

But it is now time to look at that other side of things in which his vitality of imagination is seen. His meditative eye penetrates not less deep when turned on the heart and character of man than when it contemplates the face of nature. It has been already noted that in the latter department his range is limitless; while in the former it is not only restricted, but restricted within marked and definite bounds. For man as he is found in cities, or as he appears in the complex conditions of advanced civilization, Wordsworth cares little; he turns his back on the streets, the drawing-rooms, the mart, and the 'change, but lovingly enters the cottage and the farm, and walks with the shepherd on his hills, or the vagrant on the lonely roads. The choice of his characters from humble and rustic life, was caused partly by the original make of his nature, partly from his early training, which made him more at home with these than with artificial man, partly also from that republican fervor which he imbibed in his opening manhood. He believed that in country-people what is permanent in human nature, the essential feelings and passions of mankind, exist in greater simplicity and strength. Their manners, he thought, spring more directly from such feelings, and more faithfully express them, and their lives and occupations are surrounded with what is grandest and most beautiful in nature. These are the reasons he gives for selecting his subjects from humble life, and within this range he, for the most part, confines himself. There is still another limitation. Even in these characters he is not so much at home in dealing with their trivial outside appearance, or little laughable peculiarities of manner or costume. He has small caring for these things, and when he sets to describe them he often fails, as in the "Idiot Boy" perhaps, and

in "Goody Blake." A few touches of real humor would have wonderfully relieved these personages; but this Wordsworth has not to give. He cannot, as Burns often does, exhibit his humble characters dramatically, does not laugh and sing, much less drink with his peasants; he is not quite one of themselves, sharing their thoughts, and having no other higher thoughts. What he sets himself to portray is their serious feelings, the deep things of the soul, that in which the peasant and the peer are one, and in which, as Wordsworth thinks, the advantage may often lie with the former. He has, as Coleridge has said, "deep sympathy with man as man; but it is the sympathy of a contemplator rather than a fellow-sufferer or co-mate, but of a contemplator from whose view no difference of rank conceals the sameness of nature; no injuries of time and weather, of toil or even of ignorance, wholly disguise the human face divine." In fact, it is the moral and spiritual part of man which he most sees and feels, and other things are interesting chiefly as they effect this. His thoughts dwell on "The depth, and not the tumult of the soul;" not on the surface manners, nor on the effervescent and transitory emotions, but on those which are steadfast and forever. It is in virtue of his deep insight into these that common incidents assume for him an importance and interest which to less reflective men has seemed exaggerated or often even ludicrous. The reflections, however, which they awake in him are not only true and deep, but they are such as add new dignity or tenderness to the human life. A frail old man thanked him fervently for cutting through for him at a blow an old root, which he had haggled at long, in vain. The tears in the old man's eyes drew out from Wordsworth this reflection:—

"I've heard of hearts unkind, kind deeds  
With coldness still returning;  
Alas! the gratitude of men  
Hath oftener left me mourning."

In setting forth such characters as "The Brothers," "Michael," "The Cumberland Beggar," etc., etc. (though in the last of these there is somewhat too much moralizing,) he gives them not only as common acquaintances see them, or as they appear to themselves; this he does, but something more. He lets us see them in their relations to those unseen laws of the moral world, of which

they themselves may be unaware, but which they suggest to the inspired insight of the poet. And in this way the emotions called forth by the sight of suffering do not end in mere emotion, but strike into a more enduring, that is, a moral ground, and so are idealized and relieved. This moral vision has a wonderful power to elevate, often to solemnize things, the lowliest and most familiar. It has been said that Burns has caused many an eye to look on the poorest thatched cottages of the Scotch peasantry with a feeling which, but for Burns, they had never known. The same may be said of Wordsworth, with a difference. He has revealed, in the homeliest aspects of life, a beauty and worth not recognized before, or long forgotten. He has opened for men new sources of interest in their kind, not only in shepherds and peasants, but in tattered beggars and gypsies and wayworn tramps.

Much stuff has been talked and written about Wordsworth being a merely subjective poet. Critics had good need to be sure they were right before they characterize great poets by such vague, abstract words; for they quickly get into the minds of the reading public, and stick there, and do much mischief. True it is that Wordsworth has read his own soul, not that which was accidental or peculiar in him, but that in him which was permanent and common with all high and imaginative men. But is this all? has he done nothing more? If ever man caught the soul of things, not himself, and expressed it, Wordsworth did. That he has done it in nature almost limitlessly we have seen. In man he has done it not less truly, though more restrictedly. Taking the restrictions at their utmost, what contemporary poet (we do not speak of Scott in his novels) has left to his country such a gallery of new and individual portraits as a permanent possession? The deeper side of character no doubt it is,—the heart of men, not their clothes,—but it is character in which there is nothing of himself, nothing which all men might not or do not share. The affliction of "Margaret," "The Mad Mother," "Gypsies," "Laodamia," "The Highland Reaper," "The Wagoner," "Peter Bell," "Matthew," "Michael," "The Cumberland Beggars," all the tenants of "The Churchyard among Mountains"—what are these? What but so many separate, individual, outstanding

portraits, in which there is no shade of himself, nothing save the eye that can see them? True, it is not their outward contour, nor their complexion, or dress he most busies himself with. He painted them as Titian and Leonardo did their great portraits, with the deeper soul predominating in their countenance. If he seized this, he cared little for the rest. Let us discard, then, that foolish talk about Wordsworth as a merely subjective poet, who could give nothing but his own feelings, or copies of his own countenance. Let us look at things as they really are.

There are many other aspects in which this vital power of imagination in Wordsworth might be viewed. Only one more of these we must note, and then pass on. In him, perhaps more than in any other writer either in prose or verse of his time, we see the highest spirit of this century, in its contrast with that of the preceding, summed up and condensed. What most strikes one, in recurring to the literature of the Pope and Addison period, is its external character. In the writings of that time the play of the intellect is so little leavened by sentiment, so little of individual character is suffered to transpire. The heart, it would seem, was either dormant, or kept under strict surveillance, and not allowed to interfere with the working of the understanding. Literature appeared like a well-bred, elderly gentleman, in ruffles and periwig, of polished but somewhat chilling manners, which repel all warmth of feeling with the frost of etiquette. And just as in such society conversation is restricted to certain subjects, of these touches but the surface, and does even that in set phrases, so it was with the literature of the golden days of Queen Anne and the first two Georges. From this very limitation in the range both of subjects and treatment, there arose in the hands of the masters a perfectness of style within these limits. Just as in the finitude of Grecian architecture, perfection is more easily attained than in Gothic with its infinite aims. In the writers who followed, so-called classicism degenerated into conventionality in subject, in treatment, and in language. In Cowper, as has been said, we see the beginning of the recoil. But it was by Wordsworth that the revolt was most openly proclaimed and most fully effected. The changed spirit was no doubt in the time, and would have made its way independently of

any single man. But no one power could have helped it forward more effectually than the capacious and inward-seeing soul of Wordsworth. Whereas the poetry of the former age had dealt mainly with the outside of things, or if it sometimes went farther, it did so with such a stereotyped manner and diction as to make it look like external work, Wordsworth everywhere went straight to the inside of things. We have seen already how, whether in his own self-revelations, or in his descriptions of the visible creation, or in his delineations of men, he passed always from the surface to the centre, from the outside looks to the inward character. This one characteristic set him in entire opposition to the art of last century. Out of it arose the entire revolution he made in subjects, treatment, and diction. Seeing deeper truth and beauty in many things which had hitherto been deemed unfit subjects for poetry than in those which had hitherto been most handled by the poets, he reclaimed from the wilderness vast tracts that had been lying waste, and brought them within the poetic domain. In this way he has done a wider service to poetry than any other poet of his time; but since him no one has arisen of spirit strong and large enough to make full proof of the liberty he bequeathed.

The same freedom, and by dint of the same powers, he won for future poets with regard to the language of poetry. First, in his practice, he threw himself clear of the trammels of the so-called poetic diction which had tyrannized over English poetry for a century. This diction of course exactly represented the half-tortuous, half-classical mode of thinking and feeling. As Wordsworth rebelled against the inward spirit, as against its outward expression. The whole of the stock phrases and used-up metaphors he discarded, returned to living language of natural feeling, as it is used by men, instead of the dead form of it which had got stereotyped in books. And just as in his subjects he had taken in from the waste so much virgin soil, so in his diction he appropriated for poetic use a large amount of words, idioms, metaphors, till then disallowed by the poets. In doing so, he may here and there have made a mistake, the homely trenching on the ludicrous, as in the lines about the washing-tub and some others, long current in the ribaldry of critics. But, bating a few almost necessary failures,

he did more than any other by his usage and example to reanimate the effete language of poetry, and restore it to healthfulness, strength, and feeling. His shorter poems, both the earlier and the later, are for the most part very models of natural, powerful, and yet sensitive English; the language being, like a garment, woven out of and transparent with the thought. Of the diction of his longer blank verse poems we shall have something to say in the sequel. Then, as to the theory which he propounds in his famous preface, that the language of poetry ought in no wise to differ from that of prose, this is only his protest against the old poetic phraseology, too sweepingly laid down. His own practice is the best commentary on, and antidote to, his theory, where he has urged it to an extreme. Coleridge and De Quincey have both criticised the "Preface" severally, so that in their hands it would seem to contain either a paradox or a truism. Into this subject we cannot now enter. This only may be said on the Wordsworthian side, as against these critics, that while the language of prose receives new life and strength by adopting the idioms and phrases used in the present conversation of educated men, that of poetry may go farther, and borrow with advantage the language from cottage firesides. Who has ever listened to a peasant father or mother, as they described the last illness of one of their own children, or spoke of those who were gone, without having heard from their lips words which for natural and expressive feeling were the very essence of poetry? Poets may well adopt these; for, if they trust to their own resources, they can never equal them.

These reflections on the main characteristics of Wordsworth arose out of a survey of the poems written during his first or Grasmere period. But they have passed beyond the bounds for which they were originally intended, and may apply in large measure to his poems of the second period, written at Allan Bank in Grasmere, and during his first years at Rydal Mount. These were "The Excursion," "The White Doe of Rylstone," "The Duddon Sonnets," and some smaller poems. In these, there is perhaps less of that ethereal light, that spiritualizing power shed over nature, which forms the peculiar charm of the best of the early poems. But if there is less of natu-

realistic interpretation, there is a deepened moral wisdom, a larger entering into the heart of universal man. We spoke above of the limitations of his earlier poetry in this latter region. These in his later poems greatly disappear, partly from the expansion of the philosophic mind by years of meditation, and by kindly though limited intercourse with men; partly from a gradual lessening of the exclusive bias towards humble life, as his Republican fervor abated. As to the "Excursion," to discuss it as its importance demands would require a long separate treatise. It was a theme worthy of a great philosophic poem, which Wordsworth proposed to himself,—how a man, like the Solitary, who from domestic bereavement, and from disappointment of the impatient hopes he had formed of the French Revolution, had sunk into scepticism and despondency, can have his interest in human nature and his faith in God restored. The outward circumstances of such a subject may vary, but itself is of perennial import. French revolutions may not repeat themselves with every generation, but unbelieving cynicism is an evil of continual recurrence,—an evil which is not checked by, but would rather seem increasingly to attend on, our much-vaunted march of mind. As to the poet's way of dealing with the problem, we feel the same disappointment as many have felt, that the truths of revelation, though everywhere acknowledged, are nowhere brought prominently forward. It is the religion which the poet has extracted from nature and man's moral instincts on which he mainly insists; yet it is such a religion, so pure and so elevated, as these sources, but for the light they receive from a co-existent revelation, never could have supplied. In the crisis of the poem, when the poet has to apply his medicine to the mind diseased, and when the Solitary is importunate for an answer, the poet turns aside, and recommends communion with nature, and free intercourse with men, in a way which to many has seemed like a disavowal of the power of Christian faith. We believe, however, that this is too severe a judgment. Wordsworth knew clearly that there are many cases in which, the passages to the heart being closed by false reasonings and morbid views, the way to it is not to be found by any direct arguments, however true. What is wanted

is some antidote which shall bring back the feelings to a healthful tone, remove obstructions from within, and so through restored health of heart, put the understanding in a condition which is open to the power of truth. Awaken healthful sensibilities in the heart, and a right state of intellect will be sure to follow. This is Wordsworth's moral pathology. And the restorative discipline he recommends is that which in his own mental trial he had found effectual. This we believe to be the true account; and yet we cannot help thinking there was not only room, but even a call for a fuller enforcement of the Christian verities. The defect probably arose from the poet's carrying his own experience, and his peculiar views about the sanitary power of nature, farther than they hold true, at least for the majority of men. But though such is the advice given to the Solitary, the course practically taken is to lead him to the churchyard among the mountains at Grasmere, there to hear from the lips of the pastor how they lived and died, the lowly tenants of the surrounding graves, in order that hearing he may learn—

"To prize the breath we share with human kind  
And look upon the dust of man with awe."

Even to those who may care nothing for the philosophy, if they have feeling hearts, the "Excursion" will always be dear for its pictures of mountain scenes, and its pathetic records of rural life. The two books of the "Churchyard among the Mountains," are the most sustained in interest, and most perfect in style, of any books in the "Excursion." In themselves, they form a noble poem, full of deep insight into the heart, of attractive portraits of character, and of tender and elevating views of human life and destiny. No one with a heart to feel can read them carefully without being the better for it. Of all the lives there portrayed, perhaps there is none to which we more often revert than the affecting story of Ellen:—

"As on a sunny bank, a tender lamb  
Lurks in safe shelter from the winds of March,  
Screened by its parent, so that little mound  
Lies guarded by its neighbor; the small heap  
Speaks for itself; an Infant there doth rest;  
The sheltering hillock is the Mother's grave.  
If mild discourse, and manners that conferred  
A natural dignity on humblest rank;  
If gladsome spirits, and benignant looks,  
That for a face not beautiful did more  
Than beauty for the fairest face can do;  
And if religious tenderness of heart,

Grieving for sin, and penitential tears  
Shed when the clouds had gathered and distained  
The spotless ether of a maiden life ;  
If these may make a hallowed spot of earth  
More holy in the sight of God or Man ;  
Then, o'er that mould, a sanctity shall brood  
Till the stars sicken at the day of doom."

Then follows the character of the cottage girl, her love, betrayal, the broken vow ; her shame and sorrow, relief by the birth of her child, the necessity to leave her own and nurse a neighbor's child ; her own child's sickness, and she not allowed to visit it ; its death, her long vigils by its grave, a weeping Magdalene,—ended by her own decline :—

" Meek saint ! through patience glorified on earth !  
In whom, as by her lonely hearth she sat,  
The ghastly face of cold decay put on  
A sunlike beauty, and appeared divine !  
She said,  
' He who afflicts me knows what I can bear ;  
And when I fail, and can endure no more,  
Will meroifully take me to himself.'  
So, through the cloud of death, her spirit passed  
Into that pure and unknown world of love  
Where injury cannot come."

They say that Wordsworth wants passion. For feeling, not on the surface but in the depth, pathos pure and profound, what of modern verse can equal this story and that of Margaret ? The very roll of the lines above quoted is oracular. There is in them the echo of a soul, the most capacious, tender, and profound that has spoken through modern poetry.

Having spoken of these verses, one word must be said in passing of Wordsworth's blank verse. In the "Excursion," and more still in the "Prelude," it often greatly needs condensation, may even be said to be tediously prolix. When speaking of homely matters, there is circumlocution at times amounting to awkwardness ; and when philosophizing, there is, unlike the smaller poems, too profuse a use of long-winded Latin words, to the neglect of the mother Saxon. Yet even in these passages, there is hardly a page without some "atoning" lines of the true Wordsworthian mould. Even in those abstruser disquisitions of the "Excursion," which seem most prosy, there are seldom wanting some of those glances of deeper vision, by which old neglected truths are flashed with new power on the consciousness, or new relations of truth, which had hitherto lain hidden, are for the first time revealed. Of such apophthegms of moral wisdom, how large a

number could be gleaned from that poem alone ! But it is in the passages where Wordsworth's inspiration kindles, that the full power of his blank verse is to be seen. Such in the "Excursion" are the account of the Wanderer's feelings, when, a boy, he watched the sunrise over Athole, and indeed the whole description of his boyhood, in which Wordsworth reproduces much of his own Esthwaite experience. The story of Margaret already spoken of, the description of the Langdale Pikes, the Solitary's history of himself, the Wanderer's advice to him at the close of "Despondency Corrected," and we may add almost the whole of the two books of the Churchyard. Of the characters who form the chief speakers in the poem, the Pedler or Wanderer, the Solitary, and the Pastor, we have not time to say one word. Those who wish to see from what materials Wordsworth framed them will find some interesting memoranda from his own lips, in the biography by his nephew, and now, we believe, incorporated in the editions of his Poems of 1857. It seems strange now to look back to the outcry that was long made against the employment of a pedler as the chief figure of the poem. That this should now seem to most quite natural, or, at least, noways offensive, may serve to mark the change in literary feeling, which Wordsworth himself did so much to introduce.

The "Excursion" was published in 1814, and the following year produced another long poem, "The White Doe of Rylstone." This poem pronounced by the great critic of the day to be "the very worst poem he ever saw imprinted in a quarto volume," has a very bewitching and unique charm of its own. The scene is laid in the days of Queen Elizabeth, and begins and ends with Bolton Priory, and the story of a white doe which haunts it. This doe had been the favorite of Emily Norton, sole daughter of Richard Norton of Rylstone Hall, who, with his eight sons, had marched forth in the army of the Catholic Lords engaged in the insurrection known as the Rising of the North. Emily and a ninth son, Francis, were of the Protestant faith, and disapproved of the enterprise. But he, without taking part in the expedition, follows his father, to be of what use he can : sees him and his eight brothers led to execution, and is himself accidentally slain, and buried in Bolton Priory. The sister's lot is to remain be-

hind, to hear of the utter extinction of her house, and by force of passive fortitude

"To abide

The shock, and finally secure  
O'er pain and grief a triumph pure."

The white doe which had been her companion in happier days, comes to her side and seems to enter into her sorrow, attends her when on moonlight nights she visited Bolton and her brothers' grave, and, long years after she is gone, continues to haunt the hallowed place. "Everything attempted by the principal personages fails in its material effects, succeeds in its moral and spiritual." This is Wordsworth's own account of it. And certainly the active and warlike parts of the poem are needlessly tame and unexciting, forming a marked contrast with the way Scott would have treated the same subjects. That Wordsworth could, if he chose, have improved these parts of his poem there can be no doubt, for the song of "Brougham Castle" and several of the warlike sonnets, prove that he could, when so minded, strike a Tyrtæan strain. But if, in the "White Doe," he fails where Scott would have succeeded, he does what neither Scott nor any one else could equally have done. Gazing on Bolton's ruined abbey, as it stands on its green holm, looked down on by majestic woods and quiet uplands, and lulled by the murmuring Wharfe, his whole heart is filled by the impressive and hallowed scene. And all the feelings awakened within him he gathers and concentrates in this legendary creature, making her at every turn, whether passing under broken arch, or throwing a gleam into dark black vault, or crouching in the moonlight on the Nortone's green grave, bring out some new lineament, call up some fair imagination. She is the most perfectly ideal embodiment of the finer spirit of the place that could have entered into poet's heart to conceive.

Of "Peter Bell" and "The Waggoner," both composed long before, but published after "The White Doe," we have not now space to say one word. About this time, while preparing his eldest son for college, Wordsworth studied carefully several of the Latin poets, which led to his attempting two or three poems on classical subjects. One of these, "Laodamia," will always stand out prominent even among his happiest productions. Throwing himself naturally into the situation, he informs the old Achaian legend

with a fine moral dignity peculiarly his own: "Elysian beauty, melancholy grace, Brought from a pensive, though a happy place."

And now but a word on the third period of Wordsworth's poetry. This began, we may say, about the year 1818 or 1820, and lasted till the close of his poetic life. It was the time when he wrote the "Ecclesiastical Sonnets," which, though containing here and there some gems,—such as that on "Old Abbeys"—

"Once ye were holy, ye are holy still ;  
Your spirit freely let me drink, and live ;"—  
are not, on the whole, equal to many of his earlier ones. Sonnet-writing, begun at Grasmere, had long been a favorite relaxation with him in the midst of larger works. The sonnets are like small off-lets from the main stream of his poetry, into which whatever thoughts from time to time arose might overflow. This form is well fitted for the detached musings of a meditative poet. As each new thought awakes, a new form for it has not to be sought, the vehicle is here ready, and all the poet has to do is to cast the liquid metal into the mould. Wordsworth's sonnets are so numerous and so important that they form quite a literature, which, if justice were done them, would demand an extended notice for themselves. The rest of the poems of this epoch are memorials of four separate tours; two on the Continent in 1830 and 1837, two in Scotland in 1831 and 1833. Taken as a whole, none of these tours produced anything equal to his earliest one in Scotland. But the former of the two continental tours produced one poem almost equal to any of his prime,—that on the Eclipse in 1850. The description thereof of Milan Cathedral, with its white hosts of angels, and starry zone

"All steeped in that portentous light,  
All suffering dim eclipse,"

is in his finest style.

But that among all these later poems which most wins regard is the beautiful and affecting thread of allusion to Walter Scott that runs through them. Open-minded appreciation of contemporary poets was not one of Wordsworth's strong points. A very strong one-sidedness, not hard to explain, arose out of at once his weakness and his strength. Disparaging remarks about Scott's poetry were reported from his conversation, and these seem to have been present to Lockhart's thought as he penned his last notice of Words-

worth. He might have recalled at the same time the many kind and beautiful lines in which he who never said in verse what he did not truly feel, has embodied his feelings about Scott. Wordsworth had hailed "The Lay of the Last Minstrel" with delight, and always continued to like it best of all Scott's poems. He and the "Shirra" first met, as we have seen, in the latter's house in Lasswade, just after Wordsworth and his sister had left Yarrow unvisited—

"For when we're there, although 'tis fair,  
'Twill be another Yarrow."

In 1814, as he descended from Traquair accompanied by the Ettrick Shepherd, he exclaimed,—

" And is this—Yarrow?—*This* the stream  
Of which my fancy cherished,  
So faithfully, a waking dream?  
An image that hath perished!"

In the autumn of 1831, Wordsworth and his daughter Dora set out on a visit to Abbotsford, to see Scott once more before he left Tweedside in hopes of repairing his broken health in Italy. It was but a short visit, as Scott was on the very eve of his departure; but, ere they parted, they snatched one more look at Yarrow,—the last both to Scott and to Wordsworth :—

" Once more by Newark's Castle-gate,  
Long left without a warden,  
I stood, looked, listened, and with thee  
Great Minstrel of the Border."

Though the hand of sickness lay heavy upon Scott, they did their best

" To make a day of happy hours,  
Their happy days recalling."

But throughout the "Yarrow Revisited," written in remembrance of that day, there is visible the pressure of an actual grief, little in harmony with the ideal light that is upon the two former Yarrows. "On our return in the afternoon," says Wordsworth, "we had to cross Tweed (by the old ford) directly opposite Abbotsford. The wheels of our carriage grated upon the pebbles in the bed of the stream, that there flows somewhat rapidly. A rich but sad light, of rather a purple than a golden hue, was spread over the Eildon Hill at that moment, and thinking it probable that it might be the last time Sir Walter would cross the stream, I was not a little moved, and expressed some of my feelings in the sonnet beginning

"A trouble not of clouds, or weeping rain."

This is the sonnet in which he says,—

" The might  
Of the whole world's good wishes with him goes ;  
Blessing and prayers in nobler retinue  
Than sceptred king or laurelled conqueror knows  
Follow this wondrous Potentate."

" At noon, on Thursday," Wordsworth continues, "we left Abbotsford, and on the morning of that day, Sir Walter and I had a serious conversation, *tête-à-tête*, when he spoke with gratitude of the happy life which, upon the whole, he had led. He had written in my daughter's album, before he came into the breakfast-room that morning, a few stanzas addressed to her; and while putting the book into her hand, in his own study, standing by his desk, he said to her in my presence, 'I should not have done anything of this kind, but for your father's sake; they are probably the last verses I shall ever write.'" We remember one most affecting stanza of these lines, which we heard from one who had seen them in the album,—that same album which contained autograph and unpublished lines written by Coleridge, Southey, and other poets of the time, for Wordsworth's daughter. Wordsworth visited Scotland once again in 1833, but by that time Scott was lying in the ruined aisle at Dryburg, within sound of his own Tweed. Two years after this, in the autumn of 1835, on hearing of the death of the Ettrick Shepherd, he poured forth that fine lament over his brother poets who had so fast followed each other "from sunshine to the sunless land." In it he alludes once again to his two visits to Yarrow, the one with the shepherd-poet for his guide, the other with Sir Walter.

Once more, the last time, when on a tour in Italy in 1837, his heart reverts to Scott in the "Musings near Aquapendente." Seeing the broom in flower on an Italian hill-side, his thoughts turned homeward to think how it would be budding on Fairfield and Helvellyn. Then the thought strikes him, what use of coming so far to see these new scenes, if his thoughts kept wandering back to the old ones :—

" The skirt of Greenside fell,  
And by Glenridding-screes, and low Glencoign,  
Places forsaken now, though loving still  
The muses, as they loved them in the days  
Of the old minstrels and the border bards."  
One there was, he says, who would have sympathized with him

" Not the less  
Had his sunk eye kindled at those dear words  
That spake of bards and minstrels ; and his spirit  
Had flown with mine to old Helvellyn's brow,  
Where once together, in his day of strength,  
We stood rejoicing, as if earth were free  
From sorrow, like the sky above our heads."

He alludes to the day, then thirty years gone, when Sir Walter, Sir Humphry Davy, and Wordsworth had ascended Helvellyn together. Then he goes on :—

" Years followed years, and when, upon the eve  
Of his last going from Tweedside, thought turned,  
Or by another's sympathy was led,  
To this bright land, Hope was for him no friend,  
Knowledge no help ; Imagination shaped  
No promise. Still, in more than ear-deep seats,  
Survives for me, and cannot but survive  
The tone of voice which wedded borrowed words  
To sadness not their own, when, with faint smile  
Forced by intent to take from speech its edge,  
He said, ' When I am there, although 'tis fair,  
'Twill be another Yarrow.'

Peace to his spirit ! why should Poesy  
Yield to the lure of vain regret, and hover  
In gloom on wings with confidence outspread  
To move in sunshine ? Utter thanks, my soul !  
Tempered with awe, and sweetened by compassion  
For them who in the shades of sorrow dwell,  
That I—so near the term to human life  
Appointed by man's common heritage—  
Am free to rove where Nature's loveliest looks,  
Art's noblest relics, history's rich bequests,  
Failed to reanimate and but feebly cheered  
The whole world's Darling."

This poem and the one suggested by Hogg's death, burst from out the somewhat tamer reflections of his later days as the last gleams of his old fervor. Henceforth he wrote little more poetry, but he continued almost to the end to keep retouching his former poems. Careful as he had always been in the work of composition, he went over and over them in his later years, changing them here and there, but seldom for the better. What seemed asperities were smoothed away, but for the most part the original ruggedness is poorly exchanged for the more blameless, but tamer, after-thought. It would be an interesting, and for those who make a study of these things, might be a profitable task, to bring together, by comparing one edition with another, the successive changes which many well-known lines were in this way made to endure.

During those silent years, the aged poet might be seen in green old age (and who that has seen that venerable figure will forget it?) either as he moved about the roads in the

neighborhood of Rydal Mount, or drove towards Grasmere or Ambleside in his small, rustic-looking carriage, or as he appeared on Sundays, in the family pew near the pulpit, in the small church of Rydal. There, Sunday by Sunday, he was seated, his head inclining forwards, and the long silver-white hair like a crown of glory on either side of the noble breadth of brow.

The household at Rydal Mount was darkened by a great grief towards the close of 1847,—the death of the poet's daughter Dora, Mrs. Quillinan. " Our sorrow, I feel, is for life," he wrote ; " but God's will be done ! " And it was for life. At the age of seventy-seven such a loss was not to be got over. Still with firm step, though saddened heart, he might be seen going about. As late as the autumn of 1849, as a stranger came down the road from the back of Rydal Mount, he met Wordsworth walking slowly back towards his house from the highway, to which he had just conducted some visitor. His head leaned to one side, somewhat as he does in his picture, and in his hand he carried a branch with withered leaves. He who passed him happened to have on a plaid, wrapt round him in Scottish shepherd's fashion. This attracted his notice, and as the stranger looked round, thinking it might be the last sight of him the poet had turned round and was looking back too. There was one long look, but no word, and both passed on.

" Matthew is in his grave, yet now,  
Methinks, I see him stand  
As at that moment, with a bough  
Of wilding in his hand."

In the March of next year, he was still able to walk to Grasmere and to Ambleside, the last two walks he took. The last day he was out of doors, he sat down on the stone seat of a cottage-porch, where he had been calling and watched the setting sun. It was a cold, bright evening, and he got a chill, which resulted in pleurisy. He survived the attack, but sank from after-weakness. On the 7th of April his eightieth birthday, he was prayed for in Rydal chapel, morning and evening. On Saturday the 20th when asked by his son whether he would receive the communion, he replied, " That is just what I want." Whea his wife wished to let him know that there was no hope of recovery, she said to him, " William, you are going to Dora ? " He made no answer at the time, but next day

as one of his nieces drew aside his curtain, he awoke from a quiet sleep, and said, "Is that Dora?" He breathed his last, almost imperceptibly, Tuesday, the 23d, at noon, the same day as that on which Shakspeare was born and died.

A few days after, he was laid in that corner of Grasmere churchyard where his children had been laid before him, and to which his wife and sister have since been gathered. A plain stone, with no other word on it than "William Wordsworth," marks the spot. On one side of it are the yew-trees planted there long before by his desire (are we wrong in thinking by his own hand?) On the other, the Rotha, through a calm, clear pool, creeps quietly by. Fairfield, Helm-crag, and Silver-how look down upon his grave. Westminster contains no resting-place so fit for him.

And now, looking back on those fourscore years, it may be said, that if any life in modern times has been well-rounded and complete, Wordsworth's was. From first to last it was one noble purpose, faithfully kept, thoroughly fulfilled. The world has rarely seen so strong and capacious a soul devote itself to one, and that a lofty end, with such singleness and concentration of aim. No doubt there was a great original mind to begin with, one that saw more things, and deeper, than any other poet of his time. But what would this have achieved, had it not been backed by that moral strength, that ironness of resolve? It was this that enabled him to turn aside from professions that he was little suited for, and with something less than a hundred a year to face the future. In time, doubtless, other helps were added, and long before the end, he was possessed of competent means. But this is only another instance of the maxim, "Providence helps them who help themselves." That life at Townend had encountered and overcome the difficulty before the help came. Again, the same moral fortitude appears in the firmness with which he kept his purpose, and the industry with which he wrought it out. Undiscouraged by neglect, undeterred by obloquy and ridicule, in the face of obstacles that would have daunted almost any other man, he kept on his way unmoved, and wrought out the gift that was in him till the work was complete. Few poets have ever so fully uttered the thing that was given them

to speak. And the result has been that he has bequeathed to the world a body of high thought and noble feeling which will continue to make all who apprehend it think more deeply and feel more wisely to the end of time.

The question has often been asked how far Wordsworth was a religious poet; that he was a religious man no one doubts. In his earlier poems, especially, as in "*Tintern Abbey*," and others, men have pointed to passages, and said, "These are pantheistic in their tendency." The supposition that Wordsworth ever maintained a pantheistic philosophy, ever held a deliberate theory of the divine Being as impersonal, is contradicted both by many an express declaration of his own, and by what is known of his life. The truth seems to be that, during that period of his life when his feelings about nature were most vivid, and most imaginatively expressed in verse, he felt the presence in all nature of a vast life, a moving spirit, which he did not, at least in his verse, identify with the living personal God of whom conscience and the Bible witness. His earlier poetry generally stops short of such distinct personality. But whether he so stopped short because nature does not in itself, and from its unaided resources, suggest more, or whether he stopped short because he was merely describing his own experience, and that experience was defective, this we do not venture to determine. If defect there is, who is he that has a right to blame him? Only he who, having felt as broadly and profoundly the vast life that is in nature, has bridged over the gulf between this and the higher religious truth, and taught men so to do. To this man and to none other, shall be conceded the right of finding fault with what Wordsworth has done. In Wordsworth's treatment of human nature, the same question meets us in another form. In the "*Prelude*," and other poems of the first epoch, it cannot be denied that the self-restorative power of the soul seems asserted, and the sufficingness of nature to console the wounded spirit is implied, in a way which Wordsworth, if distinctly questioned, would, perhaps at any time, certainly in his later years, have been the first to disavow. That he was himself conscious of this defect may be gathered from the change he made in the reflections with which the story of Margaret, in the "*Excursion*,"

closes. This story was written among the last years of last century, at Racedown or Alfoxden. Through all the early editions of his poems it stood thus:—

"The old man, noting this, resumed, and said, 'My friend ! enough to sorrow you have given, The purposes of wisdom ask no more ; Be wise and cheerful, and no longer read The forms of things with an unworthy eye.' "

In the one-volume edition of his works, which appeared somewhere about the year 1845, we, for the first time, read the following addition, inserted after the third line of the above :—

"Nor more would she have craved as due to One Who, in her worst distress, had oftentimes felt The unbounded might of prayer ; and learned, with soul

Fixed on the Cross, that consolation springs From sources deeper far than deepest pain, For the meek Sufferer. Why then should we read The forms of things with an unworthy eye ? A little farther on, the "Wanderer" proceeds to say that once as he passed that way, the ruined cottage conveyed to his heart—

"So still an image of tranquillity, So calm and still, and looked so beautiful Amid the uneasy thoughts which filled my mind, That what we feel of sorrow and despair From ruin and from change, and all the grief The passing shows of Being leave behind, Appeared an idle dream that could not live Where meditation was."

Instead of the last line and a half, the later editions have the following:—

"Appeared an idle dream, that could maintain, Nowhere, dominion o'er the enlightened spirit Whose meditative sympathies repose Upon the breast of faith."

To say that as years increased Wordsworth's faith in the vital Christian truths grew more confirmed and deep, that in himself were fulfilled his own words—

"Peace settles where the intellect is meek, The faith heaven strengthens where He moulds the creed,"

is only to say that he was growingly a good man. This growth many a line of his later poems, besides incidental notices in his letters and other memoranda of his nephew's biography, clearly exhibit. No doubt, the wish will at times arise, that the unequalled power of spiritualizing nature, and of originating tender and solemn views of human life, had, for the sake of other men, been oftener and more unreservedly turned on the great truths of Christian faith. At the same time, when such a regret does arise, it is but fair that it should be tempered by remembering, as he himself urges, that "his works, as well as those of other poets, should not be considered as developing all the influences which his own heart recognized, but rather those which he felt able

as an artist, to display to advantage." At another time he assured a correspondent that he had been averse to frequent mention of the mysteries of Christian faith, not because he did not duly feel them, but because he felt them too deeply to venture on too free handling of them. Above all, if he has not, any more than the greatest of former poets, done all that our hearts desire, let us not on that account fail to appreciate the good work he has done. What that work is cannot be better described than in the words in which the greatest purely religious poet of the age dedicated to Wordsworth his Oxford lectures on poetry : "Utanimos, ad sanctiora erigeret," to "raise men's minds to holier thoughts" both of nature and of man. This is the tendency of every line he wrote. Taking the commonest sights of earth, and the lowliest facts of life, to elevate and enoble these, to find pathways by which the mind may naturally pass upward, to an ampler ether, a diviner air, this is his peculiar function. If he seldom ventures within the inner sanctuary, he everywhere leads to its outer court, lifts our thoughts into a region "neighboring to heaven, and that no foreign land." If he was not universal in the sense in which Shakspeare was, and Goethe aimed to be, it was because he was smitten with too deep an enthusiasm for those truths by which he was possessed. His eye was too intense, too prophetic, to admit of his looking at life dramatically. In fact, no poet of modern times has had in him so much of the prophet. In the world of nature, to be a revealer of things hidden, an interpreter of new and unsuspected relations, the opener of a new sense in men ; in the moral world, the teacher of truths hitherto neglected, or unobserved, the awakener of the consciousness to the solemnities that encompass life, deepening our reverence for the essential soul, apart from accident and circumstance, making men feel more truly, more tenderly, more profoundly, lifting the thoughts upward through the shows of time to that which is permanent and eternal,—this is the office which he will not cease to fulfil, as long as the English language lasts. What earth's far-off lonely mountains do for the plains and the cities, that Wordsworth has done and will do for literature, and through literature for society ; sending down great rivers of higher truth, fresh purifying winds of feeling, to those who least dream from what quarter they come. The more thoughtful of each generation will draw nearer and observe him more closely, will ascend his imaginative heights, and sit under the shadow of his profound meditations, and, in proportion as they drink in his spirit, will become purer and nobler men.

## CONCLUSION.—CHAPTER XLVI.

MR. WENTWORTH did not accept Mrs. Morgan's sudden invitation, partly because his "people" did not leave Carlingford that evening, and partly because, though quite amiably disposed towards the rector, whom he had worsted in fair fight, he was not sufficiently interested in anything he was like to hear or see in Mr. Morgan's house to move him to spend his evening there. He returned a very civil answer to the invitation of the rector's wife, thanking her warmly for her friendliness, and explaining that he could not leave his father on the last night of his stay in Carlingford; after which he went to dinner at his aunts', where the household was still much agitated. Not to speak of all the events which had happened and were happening, Jack, who had begun to tire of his new character of the repentant prodigal, had shown himself in a new light that evening, and was preparing to leave, to the relief of all parties. The prodigal, who no longer pretended to be penitent, had taken the conversation into his own hands at dinner. "I have had things my own way since I came here," said Jack; "somehow it appears I have a great luck for having things my own way. It is you scrupulous people who think of others and of such antiquated stuff as duty, and so forth, that get yourselves into difficulties. My dear aunt, I am going away; if I were to remain an inmate of this house—I mean to say, could I look forward to the privilege of continuing a member of this Christian family—another day, I should know better how to conduct myself; but I am going back to my bad courses, Aunt Dora; I am returning to the world"—

"Oh! Jack, my dear, I hope not," said Aunt Dora, who was much bewildered, and did not know what to say.

"Too true," said the relapsed sinner; "and considering all the lessons you have taught me, don't you think it is the best thing I could do? There is my brother Frank, who has been carrying other people about on his shoulders, and doing his duty; but I don't see that you good people are at all moved in his behalf. You leave him to fight his way by himself, and confer your benefits elsewhere, which is an odd sort of lesson for a worldling like me. As for Gerald, you know he's a virtuous fool, as I have heard you all declare. There is nothing in the

world that I can see to prevent him keeping his living and doing as he pleases, as most parsons do. However, that's his own business. It is Frank's case which is the edifying case to me. If my convictions of sin had gone just a step farther," said the pitiless critic,—"if I had devoted myself to bringing others to repentance, as is the first duty of a reformed sinner, my Aunt Leonora would not have hesitated to give Skelmersdale to me!"—

"Jack, hold your tongue," said Miss Leonora; but though her cheeks burned, her voice was not so firm as usual, and she actually failed in putting down the man who had determined to have his say.

"Fact, my dear aunt," said Jack. "If I had been a greater rascal than I am, and gone a little farther, you and your people would have thought me quite fit for a cure of souls. I'd have come in for your good things that way as well as other ways; but here is Frank, who even I can see is a right sort of parson. I don't pretend to fixed theological opinions," said this unlooked-for oracle, with a comic glance aside at Gerald, the most unlikely person present to make any response; "but, so far as I can see, he's a kind of fellow most men would be glad to make a friend of when they were under a cloud,—not that he was ever very civil to me. I tell you, so far from rewarding him for being of the true sort, you do nothing but snub him, that I can see. He looks to me as good for work as any man I know; but you'll give your livings to any kind of wretched make-believe before you'll give them to Frank. I am aware," said the heir of the Wentworths, with a momentary flush, "that I have never been considered much of a credit to the family; but if I were to announce my intention of marrying and settling, there is not one of the name that would not lend a hand to smooth matters. That is the reward of wickedness," said Jack, with a laugh; "as for Frank, he's a perpetual curate, and may marry perhaps fifty years hence; that's the way you good people treat a man who never did anything to be ashamed of in his life; and you expect me to give up my evil courses after such a lesson? I trust I am not such a fool," said the relapsed prodigal. He sat looking at them all in his easy way, enjoying the confusion, the indignation, and wrath with which his address was received. "The man who gets his own way is the man who takes it," he concluded, with his

usual composure, pouring out Miss Leonora's glass of claret as he spoke.

Nobody had ever before seen the strong-minded woman in so much agitation. "Frank knows what my feelings are," she said, abruptly. "I have a great respect for himself; but I have no confidence in his principles. I—I have explained my ideas about church patronage"—

But here the squire broke in. "I always said, sir," said the old man, with an unsteady voice, "that if I ever lived to see a thing or two amended that was undoubtedly objectionable, your brother Jack's advice would be invaluable to the family as a—as a man of the world. I have nothing to say against clergymen, sir," continued the squire, without it being apparent whom he was addressing, "but I have always expressed my conviction of—the value of your brother Jack's advice as—as a man of the world."

This speech had a wonderful effect upon the assembled family, but most of all upon the son thus commended, who lost all his ease and composure as his father spoke, and turned his head stiffly to one side, as if afraid to meet the squire's eyes, which indeed were not seeking his, but were fixed upon the table, as was natural, considering the state of emotion in which Mr. Wentworth was. As for Jack, when he had steadied himself a little, he got up from his seat, and tried to laugh, though the effort was far from being a successful one.

"Even my father applauds me, you see, because I am a scamp and don't deserve it," he said, with a voice which was partially choked. "Good-by, sir; I am going away."

The squire rose too, with the hazy bewildered look of which his other children were afraid. "Good-by, sir," said the old man, and then made a pause before he held out his hand. "You'll not forget what I've said, Jack," he added, with a little haste. "It's true enough, though I haven't that confidence in you that—that I might have had. I am getting old, and I have had two attacks, sir," said Mr. Wentworth, with dignity; "and anyhow, I can't live forever. Your brothers can make their own way in the world, but I haven't saved all that I could have wished. When I am gone, Jack, be just to the girls and the little children," said the squire; and with that took his son's

hand and grasped it hard, and looked his heir full in the face.

Jack Wentworth was not prepared for any such appeal; he was still less prepared to discover the unexpected and inevitable sequence with which one good sentiment leads to another. He quite faltered and broke down in this unlooked-for emergency. "Father," he said, unawares, for the first time for ten years, "if you wish it, I will join you in breaking the entail."

"No such thing, sir," said the squire, who, so far from being pleased, was irritated and disturbed by the proposal. "I ask you to do your duty, sir, and not to shirk it," the head of the house said, with natural vehemence, as he stood with that circle of Wentworths round him, giving forth his code of honor to his unworthy heir.

While his father was speaking, Jack recovered a little from his momentary *attendrissement*. "Good-by, sir; I hope you'll live a hundred years," he said, wringing his father's hand, "if you don't last out half a dozen of me, as you ought to do. But I'd rather not anticipate such a change. In that case," the prodigal went on, with a certain huskiness in his voice, "I dare say I should not turn out so great a rascal as—as I ought to do. To-day and yesterday it has even occurred to me by moments that I was your son, sir," said Jack Wentworth; and then he made an abrupt stop and dropped the squire's hand, and came to himself in a surprising way. When he turned toward the rest of the family, he was in perfect possession of his usual courtesy and good spirits. He nodded to them all round, with superb good-humor. "Good-by, all of you; I wish you better luck, Frank, and not so much virtue. Perhaps you will have a better chance now the lost sheep has gone back to the wilderness. Good-by to you all. I don't think I've any other last words to say." He lighted his cigar with his ordinary composure, in the hall, and whistled one of his favorite airs as he went through the garden. "Oddly enough, however, our friend Wodehouse can beat me in that," he said with a smile, to Frank who had followed him out, "perhaps in other things too, who knows? Good-by, and good luck, old fellow." And thus the heir of the Wentworths disappeared into the darkness which swallowed him up, and was seen no more.

But naturally there was a good deal of commotion in the house. Miss Leonora, who never had known what it was to have nerves in the entire course of her existence, retired to her own room with a headache, to the entire consternation of the family. She had been a strong-minded woman all her life, and managed everybody's affairs without being distracted and hampered in her career, by those doubts of her own wisdom, and questions as to her own motives, which will now and then afflict the minds of weaker people, when they have to decide for others. But this time an utterly novel and unexpected accident had befallen Miss Leonora; a man of no principles at all had delivered his opinion upon her conduct,—and so far from finding his criticism contemptible, or discovering in it the ordinary outcry of the wicked against the righteous, she had found it true, and by means of it had, for perhaps the first time in her life, seen herself as others saw her. Neither was the position in which she found herself one from which she could get extricated even by any daring arbitrary exertion of will, such as a woman in difficulties is sometimes capable of. To be sure, she might still have cut the knot in a summary feminine way,—might have said "No" abruptly to Julia Trench and her curate, and, after all, have bestowed Skelmersdale, like any other prize or reward of virtue, upon her nephew Frank,—a step which Miss Dora Wentworth would have concluded upon at once without any hesitation. The elder sister, however, was gifted with a truer perception of affairs. Miss Leonora knew that there were some things which could be done, and yet could not be done,—a piece of knowledge difficult to a woman. She recognized the fact that she had committed herself, and got into a corner, from which there was but one possible egress; and as she acknowledged this to herself, she saw at the same time that Julia Trench (for whom she had been used to entertain a good-humored contempt as a clever sort of girl enough) had managed matters very cleverly, and that, instead of dispensing her piece of patronage, like an optimist, to the best, she had, in fact, given it up to the most skilful and persevering angler, as any other woman might have done. The blow was bitter, and Miss Leonora did not seek to hide it from herself, not to say that the unpleasant discovery was aggravated by

having been thus pointed out by Jack, who in his own person had taken her in, and cheated his sensible aunt. She felt humbled, and wounded in the tenderest point, to think that her reprobate nephew had seen through her, but that she had not been able to see through him, and had been deceived by his professions of penitence. The more she turned it over in her mind, the more Miss Leonora's head ached; for was it not growing apparent that she, who prided herself so much on her impartial judgment, had been moved, not by heroic and stoical justice and the love of souls, but a good deal by prejudice, and a good deal by skilful artifice, and very little indeed by that highest motive which she called the glory of God? And it was Jack who had set all this before her clear as daylight. No wonder the excellent woman was disconcerted. She went to bed gloomily with her headache, and would tolerate no ministrations, neither of sal-volatile nor eau-de-cologne, nor even of green tea. "It always does Miss Dora a power of good," said the faithful domestic who made this last suggestion; but Miss Leonora answered only by turning the unlucky speaker out of the room, and locking the door against any fresh intrusion. Miss Dora's innocent headaches were articles of a very different kind from this, which proceeded neither from the heart nor the digestion, but from the conscience, as Miss Leonora thought,—with, possibly, a little aid from the temper, though she was less conscious of that. It was indeed a long series of doubts and qualms, and much internal conflict, which resulted, through the rapidly maturing influences of mortification and humbled self-regard, in this ominous and awe-inspiring Headache which startled the entire assembled family, and added fresh importance to the general crisis of Wentworth affairs.

"I should not wonder if it was the Wentworth complaint," said Miss Dora, with a sob of fright, to the renewed and increased indignation of the squire.

"I have already told you that the Wentworth complaint never attacks females," Mr. Wentworth said emphatically, glad to employ what sounded like a contemptuous title for the inferior sex.

"Yes, oh, yes: but then Leonora is not exactly what you would call—a female," said poor Miss Dora, from whom an emergency so unexpected had taken all her little wits.

While the house was in such an agitated condition, it is not to be supposed that it could be very comfortable for the gentlemen when they came up-stairs to the drawing-room, and found domestic sovereignty overthrown by a headache which nobody could comprehend, and chaos reigning in Miss Leonora's place. Naturally there was, for one of the party at least, a refuge sweet and close at hand, to which his thoughts had escaped already. Frank Wentworth did not hesitate to follow his thoughts. Against the long years when the family bonds make up all that is happiest in life, there must always be reckoned those moments of agitation and revolution, during which the bosom of a family is the most unrestful and disturbing place in existence, from which it is well to have a personal refuge and means of escape. The Perpetual Curate gave himself a little shake, and drew a long breath, as he emerged from one green door in Grange Lane and betook himself to another. He shook himself clear of all the Wentworth perplexities, all the family difficulties and doubts, and betook himself into the paradise which was altogether his own, and where there were no conflicting interests or differences of opinion. He was in such a hurry to get there that he did not pay any attention to the general aspect of Grange Lane, or to the gossips who were gathered round Elsworthy's door; all that belonged to a previous stage of existence. At present he was full of the grand discovery, boldly stated by his brother Jack,—“The man who get his own way is the one who *takes* it.” It was not an elevated doctrine, or one that had hitherto commended itself specially to the mind of the Perpetual Curate; but he could not help thinking of his father's pathetic reliance upon Jack's advice as a man of the world, as he laid up in his mind the prodigal's maxim, and felt, with a little thrill of excitement, that he was about to act on it; from which manner of stating the case Mr. Wentworth's friends will perceive that self-will had seized upon him in the worst form; for he was not going boldly up to the new resolution with his eyes open, but had resigned himself to the tide, which was gradually rising in one united flux of love, pride, impatience, sophistry, and inclination; which he watched with a certain passive content, knowing that the stormy current would carry him away.

Mr. Wentworth, however, reckoned without

his host, as is now and then the case with most men, Perpetual Curates included. He walked into the other drawing-room, which was occupied only by two ladies, where the lamp was burning softly on the little table in the corner, and the windows, half open, admitted the fragrant air, the perfumed breath, and stillness and faint inarticulate noises, of the night. Since the visit of Wodehouse in the morning, which had driven Lucy into her first fit of passion, an indescribable change had come over the house, which had now returned to the possession of its former owners, looked again like home. It was very quiet, in the familiar room which Mr. Wentworth knew so well, for it was only when excited by events “beyond their control,” as Miss Wodehouse said, that the sister could forget what had happened so lately,—the loss which had made a revolution in their world. Miss Wodehouse, who for the first time in her life was busy, and had in hand a quantity of mysterious calculations and lists to make out, sat at the table in the centre of the room, with her desk open, and covered with long slips of paper. Perhaps it was to save her rector trouble that the gentle woman gave herself so much labor; perhaps she liked putting down on paper all the things that were indispensable for the new establishment. At all events, she looked up only to give Mr. Wentworth a smile and sisterly nod of welcome as he came in and made his way to the corner where Lucy sat, not unexpectant. Out of the disturbed atmosphere he had just left, the Perpetual Curate came softly to that familiar corner, feeling that he had suddenly reached his haven, and that Eden itself could not have possessed a sweeter peace. Lucy in her black dress, with traces of the exhaustion of nature in her face, which was the loveliest face in the world to Mr. Wentworth, looked up and welcomed him with that look of satisfaction and content which is the highest compliment one human creature can pay to another. His presence rounded off all the corners of existence to Lucy for that moment at least, and made the world complete and full. He sat down beside her at her work-table with no further interruption to the *tête-à-tête* than the presence of the kind elder sister at the table, who was absorbed in her lists, and who, even had that pleasant business been wanting, was dear and familiar enough to both to make her spectatorship just the sweet

restraint which endears such intercourse all the more. Thus the Perpetual Curate seated himself, feeling in some degree master of the position ; and surely here, if nowhere else in the world, the young man was justified in expecting to have his own way.

"They have settled about their marriage," said Lucy, whose voice was sufficiently audible to be heard at the table, where Miss Wodehouse seized her pen hastily and plunged it into the ink, doing her best to appear unconscious, but failing sadly in the attempt. "Mr. Proctor is going away directly to make every thing ready, and the marriage is to be on the 15th of next month."

"And ours?" said Mr. Wentworth, who had not as yet approached that subject. Lucy knew that this event must be far off, and was not agitated about it as yet : on the contrary, she met his look sympathetically and with depreciation after the first natural blush, and soothed him in her feminine way, patting softly with her pretty hand the sleeve of his coat.

"Nobody knows," said Lucy. "We must wait and have patience. We have more time to spare than they have," she added, with a little laugh. "We must wait."

"I don't see the *must*," said the Perpetual Curate. "I have been thinking it all over since the morning. I see no reason why I should always have to give in, and wait : self-sacrifice is well enough when it can't be helped, but I don't see any reason for postponing my happiness indefinitely. Look here, Lucy. It appears to me at present that there are only two classes of people in the world,—those who will wait and those who wont. I don't mean to enroll myself among the martyrs. The man who gets his own way is the man who takes it. I don't see any reason in the world for concluding that I must wait."

Lucy Wodehouse was a very good young woman, a devoted Anglican, and loyal to all her duties ; but she had always been known to possess a spark of spirit, and this rebellious quality came to a sudden blaze at so unlooked-for a speech. "Mr. Wentworth," said Lucy, looking the curate in the face with a look which was equivalent to making him a low courtesy, "I understood there were two people to be consulted as to the *must* or *must not* ;" and having entered this protest she withdrew her chair a little farther off, and

bestowed her attention absolutely upon the piece of needlework in her hand.

If the ground had suddenly been cut away underneath Frank Wentworth's feet, he could not have been more surprised ; for, to tell the truth, it had not occurred to him to doubt that he himself was the final authority on this point, though, to be sure, it was part of the conventional etiquette that the lady should "fix the day." He sat gazing at her with so much surprise that for a minute or two he could say nothing. "Lucy, I am not going to have you put yourself on the other side," he said at last ; "there is not to be any opposition between you and me."

"That is as it may be," said Lucy, who was not mollified. "You seem to have changed your sentiments altogether since the morning, and there is no change in the circumstances, at least that I can see."

"Yes, there is a great change," said the young man. "If I could have sacrificed myself in earnest and said nothing"—

"Which you were quite free to do," interrupted Lucy, who, having given way to temper once to-day, found in herself an alarming proclivity towards a repetition of the offence.

"Which I was quite free to do," said the Perpetual Curate, with a smile, "but could not, and did not, all the same. Things are altogether changed. Now be as cross as you please, you belong to me, *Lucia mia*. To be sure, I have no money"—

"I was not thinking of that," said the young lady, under her breath.

"Of course one has to think about it," said Mr. Wentworth ; "but the question is whether we shall be happier and better going on separate in our usual way, or making up our minds to give up something for the comfort of being together. Perhaps you will forgive me for taking *that* view of the question," said the curate, with a little enthusiasm. "I have got tired of ascetic principles. I don't see why it must be best to deny myself and postpone myself to other things and other people. I begin to be of my brother Jack's opinion. The children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of light. A man who will wait has to wait. Providence does not invariably reward him after he has been tried, as we used to suppose. I am willing to be a poor man because I can't help it ; but I am not

willing to wait and trust my happiness to the future when it is in my reach now," said the unreasonable young man, to whom it was of course as easy as it was to Lucy to change the position of his chair, and prevent the distance between them being increased. Perhaps he might have carried his point even at that moment, had not Miss Wodehouse, who had heard enough to alarm her, come forward hastily in a fright on the prudential side.

"I could not help hearing what you were saying," said the elder sister. "Oh, Mr Wentworth, I hope you don't mean to say that you can't trust Providence? I'm sure that is not Lucy's way of thinking. I would not mind, and I am sure she would not mind, beginning very quietly; but then you have nothing, next to nothing, neither of you. It might not matter just at the first," said Miss Wodehouse, with serious looks; "but then—afterwards, you know," and a vision of a nursery flashed upon her mind as she spoke. "Clergymen always have such large families," she said half out before she was aware, and stopped, covered with confusion, not daring to look at Lucy to see what effect such a suggestion might have had upon her. "I mean," cried Miss Wodehouse, hurrying on to cover over her inadvertence if possible, "I have seen such cases; and a poor clergyman who has to think of the grocer's bill and the baker's bill instead of his parish and his duty—there are some things you young people know a great deal better than I do, but you don't know how dreadful it is to see that."

Here Lucy, on her part, was touched in a tender point, and interposed. "For a man to be teased about bills," said the young housekeeper, with flushed cheeks and an averted countenance, "it must be not his poverty, but his—his wife's fault."

"Oh, Lucy, don't say so," cried Miss Wodehouse; "what is a poor woman to do, especially when she has no money of her own, as you wouldn't have? and then the struggling, and getting old before your time, and all the burdens"—

"Please don't say any more," said Lucy. "There was no intention on—on any side to drive things to a decision. As for me, I have not a high opinion of myself. I would not be the means of diminishing any one's comforts," said the spiteful young woman.

"How can I be sure that I might not turn out a very poor compensation? We settled this morning how all that was to be, and I for one have not changed my mind—as yet," said Lucy. That was all the encouragement Mr. Wentworth got when he propounded his new views. Things looked easy enough when he was alone, and suffered himself to drift on pleasantly on the changed and heightened current of personal desires and wishes; but it became apparent to him, after that evening's discussion, that even in Eden itself, though the dew had not yet dried on the leaves, it would be highly incautious for any man to conclude that he was sure of having his own way. The Perpetual Curate returned a sadder and a more doubtful man to Mrs. Hadwin's, to his own apartments; possibly, as the two states of mind so often go together, a wiser individual too.

#### CHAPTER XLVII.

The dinner-party at the rectory, to which Mr. Wentworth did not go, was much less interesting and agreeable than it might have been, had he been present. As for the rector and his wife, they could not but feel themselves in a somewhat strange position, having between them a secret unsuspected by the company. It was difficult to refrain from showing a certain flagging of interest in the question of the church restoration, about which, to be sure, Mr. Finial was just as much concerned as he had been yesterday; though Mr. Morgan, and even Mrs. Morgan, had suffered a great and unexplainable diminution of enthusiasm. And then Mr. Leeson, who was quite unaware of the turn that affairs had taken, and who was much too obtuse to understand how the rector could be anything but exasperated against the Perpetual Curate by the failure of the investigation, did all that he could to make himself disagreeable, which was saying a good deal. When Mrs. Morgan came into the drawing-room, and found this obnoxious individual occupying the most comfortable easy-chair, and turning over at his ease the great book of ferns, nature-printed, which was the pet decoration of the table, her feelings may be conceived by any lady who has gone through a similar trial; for Mr. Leeson's hands were not of the irreproachable purity which becomes the fingers of a gentleman when he goes out to dinner. "I know some people who always wear

gloves when they turn over a portfolio of prints," Mrs. Morgan said, coming to the curate's side to protect her book if possible, "and these require quite as much care;" and she had to endure a discussion upon the subject, which was still more trying to her feelings; for Mr. Leeson pretended to know about ferns on the score of having a Wardian case in his lodgings (which belonged to his landlady), though in reality he could scarcely tell the commonest spleenwort from a lycopodium. While Mrs. Morgan went through this trial, it is not to be wondered at if she hugged to her heart the new idea of leaving Carlingford, and thought to herself that whatever might be the character of the curate (if there was one) at Searsfield, any change from Mr. Leeson must be for the better. And then the unfortunate man, as if he were not disagreeable enough already, began to entertain his unwilling hostess with the latest news.

"There is quite a commotion in Grange Lane," said Mr. Leeson. "Such constant disturbances must deteriorate the property, you know. Of course, whatever one's opinion may be, one must keep it to one's self, after the result of the investigation; though I can't say I have unbounded confidence in trial by jury," said the disagreeable young man.

"I am afraid I am very slow of comprehension," said the rector's wife. "I don't know in the least what you mean about trial by jury. Perhaps it would be best to put the book back on the table; it is too heavy for you to hold."

"Oh, it doesn't matter," said Mr. Leeson—"I mean about Wentworth, of course. When a man is popular in society, people prefer to shut their eyes. I suppose the matter is settled for the present; but you and I know better than to believe"—

"I beg you will speak for yourself, Mr. Leeson," said Mrs. Morgan, with dignity. "I have always had the highest respect for Mr. Wentworth."

"Oh, I beg your pardon," said the disagreeable curate. "I forgot; almost all the ladies are on Mr. Wentworth's side. It appears that little girl of Elsworth's has disappeared again; that was all I was going to say."

And fortunately for the curate, Colonel Chiley, who entered the room at the moment, diverted from him the attention of the lady of the house; and after that there was no opportunity of broaching the subject again until dinner was almost over. Then it was perhaps the All-Souls pudding that warmed Mr. Leeson's soul; perhaps he had taken a little more wine than usual. He took sudden advantage of that curious little pause which occurs at a well-conducted dinner-table, when the meal is concluded, and the fruit (considered apparently in orthodox circles,

a paradisaical kind of food which needs no blessing) alone remains to be discussed. As soon as the murmur of thanks from the foot of the table was over, the curate inadvertently rushed in before anybody else could break silence, and delivered his latest information at a high pitch of voice.

"Has any one heard about the Elsworthys?" said Mr. Leeson; "something fresh has happened there. I hope your verdict yesterday will not be called in question. The fact is, I believe that the girl has been taken away again. They say she has gone and left a letter saying that she is to be made a lady of. I don't know what we are to understand by that. There was some private service or other going on at St. Roque's very early in the morning. Marriage is a sacrament, you know. Perhaps Mr. Wentworth or his brother"—

"They are a queer family, the Wentworths," said old Mr. Western, "and such lots of them, sir,—such lots of them. The old ladies seem to have settled down here. I am not of their way of thinking, you know, but they're very good to the poor."

"Mr. Frank Wentworth is going to succeed his brother, I suppose," said Mr. Leeson; "it is very lucky for a man who gets himself talked of to have a family living to fall back upon"—

"No such thing—no such thing," said Mr. Procter, hastily. "Mr. Frank Wentworth means to stay here."

"Dear me," said the disagreeable curate, with an elaborate pause of astonishment. "Things must be bad indeed," added that interesting youth, with solemnity, shaking the devoted head, upon which he did not know that Mrs. Morgan had fixed her eyes, "if his own family give him up, and leave him to starve here. They never would give him up if they had not very good cause. Oh, come; I shouldn't like to believe that! I know how much a curate has to live on," said Mr. Leeson, with a smile of engaging candor. "Before they give him up like that, with two living in the family, they must have very good cause."

"Very good cause indeed," said Mrs. Morgan, from the head of the table. The company in general had, to tell the truth, been a little taken aback by the curate's observations; and there was almost the entire length of the table between the unhappy man and the Avenger. "So good a reason, that it is strange how it should not have occurred to a brother clergyman. That is the evil of a large parish," said the rector's wife, with beautiful simplicity; "however hard one works, one never can know above half of the poor people; and I suppose you have been occupied in the other districts, and have not

heard what a great work Mr. Wentworth is doing. I have reason to know," said Mrs. Morgan, with considerable state, "that he will remain in Carlingford in a very different position from that which he has filled hitherto. Mr. Leeson knows how much a curate has to live upon; but I am afraid that is all he does know of such a life as Mr. Wentworth's." Mrs. Morgan paused for a moment to get breath; for her excitement was considerable, and she had many wrongs to avenge. "There is a great deal of difference in curates as well as in other things," said the indignant woman. "I have reason to know that Mr. Wentworth will remain in Carlingford in quite a different position. Now and then, even in this world, things come right like a fairy tale,—that is, when the authority is in the right hands," the rector's wife went on, with a smile at her husband, which disarmed that astonished man. "Perhaps if Mr. Leeson had the same inducement as Mr. Wentworth, he, too, would make up his mind to remain in Carlingford." Mrs. Morgan got up, as she made this speech, with a rustle and sweep of drapery which seemed all addressed to the unhappy curate, who stumbled upon his feet like the other gentlemen, but dared not for his life have approached her to open the door. Mr. Leeson felt that he had received his *congé*, as he sank back into his chair. He was too much stunned to speculate on the subject, or ask himself what was going to happen. Whatever was going to happen, there was an end of him. He had eaten the last All-Souls pudding that he ever would have presented to him under *that* roof. He sank back in the depths of despair upon his seat, and suffered the claret to pass him in the agony of his feelings. Mr. Wentworth and Mrs. Morgan were avenged.

This was how it came to be noised abroad in Carlingford that some great change of a highly favorable character was about to occur in the circumstances and position of the Curate of St. Roque's. It was discussed next day throughout the town, as soon as people had taken breath after telling each other about Rosa Elsworthy, who had indisputably been carried off from her uncle's house on the previous night. When the Wentworth family were at dinner, and just as the board was being spread in the rectory, where Mrs. Morgan was half an hour later than usual, having company, it had been discovered in Elsworthy's that the prison was vacant, and the poor little bird had flown. Mr. Wentworth was aware of a tumult about the shop when he went to the Miss Wodehouses, but was preoccupied, and paid no attention; but Mr. Leeson, who was not preoccupied, had already heard all about it when he entered the rectory. That day it was all over the town, as may be

supposed. The poor little, wicked, unfortunate creature had disappeared, no one knew how, at the moment apparently when Elsworthy went to the railway for the evening papers, a time when the errand-boys were generally rampant in the well-conducted shop. Mrs. Elsworthy, for her part, seized that moment to relieve her soul by confiding to Mrs. Hayes next door how she was worgited to death with one thing and another, and did not expect to be alive to tell the tale if things went on like this for another month; but that Elsworthy was infatuated like, and wouldn't send the hussy away, his wife complained to her sympathetic neighbor. When Elsworthy came back, however, he was struck by the silence in the house and sent the reluctant woman up-stairs—"To see if she's been made away with herself, I suppose," the indignant wife said, as she obeyed, leaving Mrs. Hayes full of curiosity on the steps of the door. Mrs. Elsworthy, however, uttered a great shriek a moment after, and came down, with a frightened face carrying a large pincushion, upon which, skewered through and through with the biggest pin she could find, Rosa had deposited her letter of leave-taking. This important document was read over in the shop by an ever-increasing group, as the news got abroad; for Elsworthy, like his wife, lost his head, and rushed about hither and thither, asking wild questions as to who had seen her last. Perhaps at the bottom, he was not so desperate as he looked, but was rather grateful than angry with Rosa for solving the difficulty. This is what the poor little runaway said:

DEAR UNCLE AND AUNT,—I write a line to let you know that them as can do better for me than any belonging to me has took me away for good. Don't make no reflections, please, nor blame nobody; for I never could have done no good, nor had any 'appiness at Carlingford after all as has happened. I don't bear no grudge, though aunt has been so unkind; but I forgive her, and uncle also. My love to all friends; and you may tell Bob Hayes as I wont forget him, but will order all my physic regular at his father's shop.—Your affectionate niece, "Rosa."

"P. S.—Uncle has no occasion to mind, for them as took charge of me has promised to make a lady of me, as he always said I was worthy of; and I leave all my things for aunt's relations, as I can't wear such poor clothes in my new station of life."

Such was the girl's letter, with its natural impertinences and natural touch of kindness; and it made a great commotion in the neighborhood, where a few spasmodic search-parties were made up with no real intentions, and came to nothing, as was to be expected. It was a dreadful thing, to be sure, to happen to a respectable family; but when things had

gone so far, the neighbors, on the whole, were inclined to believe it was the best thing Rosa could have done, and the Elsworthys, husband and wife, were concluded to be of the same opinion. When Carlingford had exhausted this subject, and had duly discussed the probabilities as to where she had gone, and whether Rosa could be the lady in a veil who had been handed into the express night-train by two gentlemen, of whom a railway-porter bore cautious testimony, the other mysterious rumor about Mr. Wentworth had its share of popular attention. It was discussed in Master's with the solemnity becoming the occasion, everybody being convinced of the fact, and nobody knowing how it was to be. One prevailing idea was, that Mr. Wentworth's brother, who had succeeded to his mother's fortune (which was partially true, like most popular versions of family history, his mother's fortune being now Gerald's sole dependence), intended to establish a great brotherhood, upon the Claydon model, in Carlingford, of which the Perpetual Curate was to be the head. This idea pleased the imagination of the town, which already saw itself talked of in all the papers, and anticipated with excitement the sight of English brothers of St. Benedict walking about in the streets, and people from the *Illustrated News* making drawings of Grange Lane. To be sure, Gerald Wentworth had gone over to the Church of Rome, which was a step too far to be compatible with the English brotherhood; but popular imagination, when puzzled and in a hurry, does not take time to master all details. Then, again, opinion wavered, and it was supposed to be the Miss Wentworths who were the agents of the coming prosperity. They had made up their mind to endow St. Roque's, and apply to the Ecclesiastical Commissioners to have it erected into a parochial district, rumor reported; and the senior assistant in Master's, who was suspected of Low-Church tendencies, was known to be a supporter of this theory. Other ideas of a vaguer character floated through the town, of which no one could give any explanation; but Carlingford was unanimous in the conviction that good fortune was coming somehow to the popular favorite, who a week ago had occupied temporarily the position of the popular *bête noire* and impersonation of evil. "But the real sort always triumphs at the last," was the verdict of Wharfside, which, like every primitive community, believed in poetic justice; and among the bargemen and their wives much greater elevation than that of a district church or the headship of a brotherhood was expected for "the clergyman." If the queen had sent for him immediately, and conferred upon him a bishopric, or at least

appointed him her private chaplain, such a favor would have excited no surprise in Wharfside, where, indeed, the public mind was inclined to the opinion that the real use of queens and other such dignitaries was to find out and reward merit. Mr. Wentworth himself laughed when the gossip reached his ears. "My people have given away all they had to give," he said to somebody who asked the question; "and I know no prospect I have of being anything but a Perpetual Curate, unless the queen sends for me and appoints me to a bishopric, as I understand is expected in Prickett's Lane. If I come to any advancement," said the Curate of St. Roque's, "it must be in social estimation, and not in worldly wealth, which is out of my way;" and he went down to Wharfside rather cheerfully than otherwise, having begun to experience that pertinacity carries the day, and that it might be possible to goad Lucy into the experiment of how much her housekeeping talents were good for, and whether, with a good wife, even a Perpetual Curate might be able to live without any particular bother in respect to the grocer's bill. Mr. Wentworth being at present warmly engaged in this business of persuasion, and as intent as ever on having his own way, was not much affected by the Carlingford gossip. He went his way to Wharfside all the same, where the service was conducted as of old, and where all the humble, uncertain voices were buoyed up and carried on by the steady, pure volume of liquid sound which issued from Lucy Wodehouse's lips into the utterance of such a Magnificat as filled Mr. Wentworth's mind with exultation. It was the woman's part in the worship,—independent, yet in a sweet subordination; and the two had come back—though with the difference that their love was now avowed and certain, and they were known to belong to each other—to much the same state of feeling in which they were before the Miss Wentworths came to Carlingford, or anything uncomfortable had happened. They had learned various little lessons, to be sure, in the interim; but experience had not done much more for them than it does for ordinary human creatures, and the chances are that Mr. Wentworth would have conducted himself exactly in the same manner another time, had he been placed in similar circumstances; for the lessons of experience, however valuable, are sometimes very slow of impressing themselves upon a generous and hasty temperament, which has high ideas of honor and consistency, and rather piques itself on a contempt for self-interest and external advantages,—which was the weakness of the Curate of St. Roque's. He returned to the "great work" in Wharfside with undiminished belief in it, and a sense of being

able to serve his God and his fellow-creatures, which, though it may seem strange to some people, was a wonderful compensation to him for the loss of Skelmersdale. "After all, I doubt very much, whether, under any circumstances, we could have left such a work as is going on here," he said to Lucy as they came up Prickett's Lane together, where the poor woman had just died peaceably in No. 10, and got done with it, poor soul; and the Sister of Mercy, in her great cloak, lifted towards him the blue eyes which were full of tears, and answered with natural emphasis, "impossible! it would have been deserting our post," and drew a step closer to him in the twilight with a sense of the sweetness of that plural pronoun which mingled so with the higher sense that it was impossible to disjoin them. And the two went on under the influence of these combined sentiments, taking comfort out of the very hardness of the world around them, in which their ministrations were so much needed, and feeling an exultation in the "duty," which was not for one, but for both, and a belief in the possibility of mending matters, in which their love for each other bore a large share; for it was not in human nature thus to begin the ideal existence, without believing in its universal extension, and in the amelioration of life and the world.

"That is all they think of," said poor Miss Wodehouse, who, between her wondering inspection of the two "young people" and her own moderate and sensible love-affairs, and the directions which it was necessary to give to her rector about the furnishing of the new house, was more constantly occupied than she had ever been in her life; "but then, if they marry, what are they to live upon? and if they don't marry"—

"Perhaps something will turn up, my dear," said old Mrs. Western, who had an idea that Providence was bound to provide for two good young people who wanted to marry; and thus the two ladies were forced to leave the matter where, indeed, the historian of events in Carlingford would willingly leave it also, not having much faith in the rewards of virtue which come convenient in such an emergency. But it is only pure fiction which can keep true to nature, and weave its narrative in analogy with the ordinary course of life—whereas history demands exactness in matters of *fact*, which are seldom true to nature, or amenable to any general rule of existence.

Before proceeding, however, to the narrative of the unexpected advancement and promotion which awaited the Perpetual Curate, it may be as well to notice that the Miss Wentworths, who during the summer had kindly given their house at Skelmersdale to

some friends who had returned in the spring from India, found themselves now in a position to return to their own proper dwelling-place, and made preparations accordingly for leaving Carlingford, in which, indeed, they had no further occupation; for, to be sure, except to the extent of that respect which a man owed to his aunts, they had no special claim upon Frank Wentworth, or right to supervise his actions, save on account of Skelmersdale, which was now finally disposed of and given away. It cannot be said that Miss Leonora had ever fully recovered the remarkable indisposition which her nephew Jack's final address had brought upon her. The very next morning she fulfilled her pledges as a woman of honor, and bestowed Skelmersdale positively and finally upon Julia Trench's curate, who indeed made a creditable enough rector in his way; but after she had accomplished this act, Miss Leonora relapsed into one unceasing watch upon her nephew Frank which was far from dispelling the tendency to headache which she showed at this period for the first and only time in her life. She watched him with a certain feeling of expiation, as she might have resorted to self-flagellation, had she lived a few hundred years before, and perhaps suffered more acute pangs in that act of discipline than could be inflicted by any physical scourge. The longer she studied the matter the more thoroughly was Miss Leonora convinced, not only that the Perpetual Curate was bent on doing his duty, but that he did it with all the force of high faculties, and a mind much more thoroughly trained, and of finer material than was possessed by the man whom she had made rector of Skelmersdale. The strong-minded woman bore quietly, with a kind of defiance, the sharp wounds with which her self-esteem was pierced by this sight. She followed up her discovery, and made herself more and more certain of the mistake she had made, not sparing herself any part of her punishment. As she pursued her investigations, too, Miss Leonora became increasingly sensible that it was not his mother's family whom he resembled, as she had once thought, but that he was out and out a Wentworth, possessed of all the family features; and this was the man whom by her own act she had disinherited of his natural share in the patronage of the family, substituting for her own flesh and blood an individual for whom, to tell the truth, she had little respect! Perhaps if she had been able to sustain herself with the thought that it was entirely a question of "principle," the retrospect might not have been so hard upon Miss Leonora; but being a woman of very distinct and uncompromising vision, she could not conceal from herself either Julia

Trench's cleverness or her own mixed and doubtful motives. Having this sense of wrong and injustice, and general failure of the duty of kindred towards Frank, it might have been supposed a little comfort to Miss Leonora to perceive that he had entirely recovered from his disappointment, and was no longer in her power, if indeed he had ever been so. But the fact was, that if anything could have aggravated her personal smart, it would have been the fact of Frank's indifference and cheerfulness, and evident capability of contenting himself with his duty and his favorite district, and his Lucy,—whom, to be sure, he could not marry, being only a perpetual curate. The spectacle came to have a certain fascination for Miss Wentworth. She kept watching him with a grim satisfaction, punishing herself, and at the same time comforting herself with the idea that, light as he made of it, he must be suffering too. She could not bear to think that he had escaped clean out of her hands, and that the decision she had come to, which produced so much pain to herself, was innoxious to Frank; and at the same time, though she could not tolerate his composure, and would have preferred to see him angry and revengeful, his evident recovery of spirits and general exhilaration increased Miss Leonora's respect for the man she had wronged. In this condition of mind the strong-minded aunt lingered over her preparations for removal, scorning much the rumor in Carlingford about her nephew's advancement, and feeling that she could never forgive him if by any chance promotion should come to him after all. "He will stay where he is. He will be a perpetual curate," Miss Leonora said, uttering what was in reality a hope under the shape of a taunt; and things were still in this position when Grange Lane in general and Miss Dora in particular (from the window of the summer-house) were startled much by the sight of the rector, in terribly correct clerical costume, as if he were going to dine with the bishop, who walked slowly down the road like a man charged with a mission, and, knocking at Mrs. Hadwin's door, was admitted immediately to a private conference with the Curate of St. Roque's.

## CHAPTER XLVIII.

It was the same afternoon that Mr Wentworth failed to attend, as he had never been known to fail before, at the afternoon school which he had set up in Prickett's Lane for the young bargemen, who, between the intervals of their voyages had a little leisure at that hour of the day. It is true there was a master provided, and the presence of the Perpetual Curate was not indispensable; but the lads, among whom, indeed, there were some men, were so much used to his presence

as to get restless at their work on this unprecedented emergency. The master knew no other resource than to send for Miss Lucy Wodehouse, who was known to be on the other side of Prickett's Lane at the moment, superintending a similar educational undertaking for the benefit of the girls. It was, as may be supposed, embarrassing to Lucy to be called upon to render an account of Mr Wentworth's absence, and invited to take his place in this public and open manner; but then the conventional reticences were unknown in *unchariside*, and nobody thought it necessary to conceal his certainty that the curate's movements were better known to Lucy than to anybody else. She had to make answer with as much composure as possible in the full gaze of so many pairs of curious eyes, that she did not know why Mr. Wentworth was absent. "Somebody is sick perhapse," said Lucy, repeating an excuse which had been made before for the Perpetual Curate; but I hope it does not make any difference," she went on, turning round upon all the upturned heads which were neglecting their work to stare at her. "Mr Wentworth would be grieved to think that his absence did his scholars any injury." Lucy looked one of the ring-leaders in the eyes as she spoke, and brought him to his senses, all the more effectually, to be sure, because she knew all about him, and was a familiar figure to the boy, suggesting various little comforts, for which, in Prickett's Lane, people were not ungrateful. But when she went back again to her girls, the young lady found herself in a state of excitement which was half annoyance and half a kind of shy pleasure. To be sure, it was quite true that they did belong to each other; but at the same time, so long as she was Lucy Wodehouse, she had no right to be called upon to represent "the clergyman," even in the "district" which was so important to both. And then it occurred to her to remember that if she remained Lucy Wodehouse that was not the curate's fault—from which thought she went on to reflect that going away with Mr. and Mrs. Proctor when they were married was not a charming prospect, not to say that it involved a renunciation of the district for the present at least, and possibly forever; for if Mr. Wentworth could not marry as long as he was a perpetual curate, it followed of necessity that he could not marry until he had left Carlingford,—an idea which Lucy turned over in her mind very seriously as she walked home, for this once unattended A new light seemed to be thrown upon the whole matter by this thought. To consent to be married simply for her own happiness, to the disadvantage in any respect of her husband, was an idea odious to this young

woman, who, like most young women, preferred to represent even to herself that it was for *his* happiness that she permitted herself to be persuaded to marry; but if duty were involved, that was quite another affair. It was quite evident to Lucy, as she walked towards Grange Lane, that the curate would not be able to find any one to take her place in the district; perhaps also—for she was honest even in her self-delusions—Lucy was aware that she might herself have objections to the finding of a substitute; and what then? Was the great work to be interrupted because she could not bear the idea of possibly diminishing some of his external comforts by allowing him to have his way, and to be what he considered happy? Such was the wonderful length to which her thoughts had come when she reached the garden-door, from which Mr. Wentworth himself, flushed and eager, came hastily out as she approached. So far from explaining his unaccountable absence, or even greeting her with ordinary politeness, the young man seized her by the arm and brought her into the garden with a rapidity which made her giddy. "What is it—what do you mean?" Lucy cried, with amazement, as she found herself whirled through the sunshine and half carried up stairs. Mr. Wentworth made no answer until he had deposited her breathless in her own chair, in her own corner, and then got down on his knee beside her, as men in his crazy circumstances are not unapt to do.

"Lucy, look here. I was a perpetual curate the other day, when you said you would have me," said the energetic lover, who was certainly out of his wits, and did not know what he was saying—"and you said you did not mind?"

"I said it did not matter," said Lucy, who was slightly piqued that he did not recollect exactly the form of so important a decision. "I knew well enough you were a perpetual curate. Has anything happened, or are you going out of your mind?"

"I think it must be that," said Mr. Wentworth. "Something so extraordinary has happened that I cannot believe it. Was I in Prickett's Lane this afternoon as usual, or was I at home in my own room talking to the rector, or have I fallen asleep somewhere, and is the whole thing a dream?"

"You certainly were not in Prickett's Lane," said Lucy. "I see what it is. Miss Leonora Wentworth has changed her mind, and you are going to have Skelmersdale after all. I did not think you could have made up your mind to leave the district. It is not news that gives me any pleasure," said the Sister of Mercy, as she loosed slowly off from her shoulders the gray cloak which was the uniform of the district. Her own thoughts

had been so different that she felt intensely mortified to think of the unnecessary decision she had been so near making, and disappointed that the offer of a living could have moved her lover to such a pitch of pleasure. "All men are alike, it seems," she said to herself, with a little quiver in her lip,—a mode of forestalling his communications which filled the Perpetual Curate with amazement and dismay.

"What are you thinking of?" he said. "Miss Leonora Wentworth has not changed her mind. That would have been a natural accident enough, but this is incredible. If you like, Lucy," he added, with an unsteady laugh, "and will consent to my original proposition, you may marry on the 15th, not the perpetual curate of St. Roque's, but the Rector of Carlingford. Don't look at me with such an unbelieving countenance. It is quite true."

"I wonder how you can talk so!" cried Lucy, indignantly; "it is all a made-up story; you know it is. I don't like practical jokes," she went on, trembling a little, and taking another furtive look at him—for somehow it was too wonderful not to be true.

"If I had been making up a story, I should have kept to what was likely," said Mr. Wentworth. "The rector has been with me all the afternoon; he says he has been offered his father's rectory, where he was brought up, and that he has made up his mind to accept it, as he always was fond of the country;—and that he has recommended me to his college for the living of Carlingford."

"Yes, yes," said Lucy, impatiently, "that is very good of Mr. Morgan; but you know you are not a member of the college, and why should you have the living? I knew it could not be true."

"They are all a set of old—Dons," said the Perpetual Curate; "that is, they are the most accomplished set of fellows in existence, Lucy,—or at least they ought to be,—but they are too superior to take an ordinary living, and condescend to ordinary existence. Here has Carlingford been twice vacant within a year—which is an unprecedented event—and Buller, the only man who would think of it, is hanging on for a colonial bishopric, where he can publish his book at his leisure. Buller is a great friend of Gerald's. It is incredible, *Lucia mia*, but it is true."

"Is it true? are you *sure* it is true?" cried Lucy; and in spite of herself she broke down and gave way, and let her head rest on the first convenient support it found, which turned out, naturally enough, to be Mr. Wentworth's shoulder, and cried as if her heart was breaking. It is so seldom in this world that things come just when they are wanted; and this was not only an acceptable benefice,

but implied the entire possession of the "district" and the most conclusive vindication of the curate's honor. Lucy cried out of pride and happiness and glory in him. She said to herself, as Mrs. Morgan had done at the beginning of her incumbency, "He will be such a rector as Carlingford has never seen." Yet at the same time, apart from her glorying and her pride, a certain sense of pain, exquisite though shortlived, found expression in Lucy's tears. She had just been making up her mind to accept a share of his lowliness, and to show the world that even a perpetual curate, when his wife was equal to her position, might be poor without feeling any of the degradations of poverty; and now she was forestalled, and had nothing to do but accept his competence, which it would be no credit to manage well! Such were the thoughts to which she was reduced, though she had come home from Prickett's Lane persuading herself that it was duty only, and the wants of the district, which moved her. Lucy cried, although not much given to crying, chiefly because it was the only method she could find of giving expression to the feelings which were too varied and too complicated for words.

All Carlingford knew the truth about Mr. Wentworth's advancement that evening, and on the next day, which was Sunday, the church of St. Roque's was as full as if the plague had broken out in Carlingford, and the population had rushed out, as they might have done in medieval times, to implore the succor of the physician-saint. The first indication of the unusual throng was conveyed to Mr. Wentworth in his little vestry after the choristers had filed into the church in their white surplices, about which, to tell the truth, the Perpetual Curate was less interested than he had once been. Elsworthy, who had been humbly assisting the young priest to robe himself, ventured to break the silence when they were alone.

"The church is very full, sir," said Elsworthy, "there's a deal of people come, sir, after hearing the news. I don't say as I've always been as good a servant as I ought to have been; but it was all through being led away, and not knowing no better, and putting my trust where I shouldn't have put it. I've had a hard lesson, sir, and I've learnt better," he continued, with a sidelong glance at the curate's face; "it was all a mistake."

"I was not finding fault with you, that I am aware of," said Mr. Wentworth, with a little surprise.

"No, sir," said Elsworthy, "I'm aware as you wasn't finding no fault; but there's looks as speaks as strong as words, and I can feel as you haven't the confidence in me as you once had. I aint ashamed to say it, sir,"

continued the clerk of St. Roque's. "I'm one as trusted in that girl's innocent looks, and didn't believe as she could do no harm. She's led me into ill-feeling with my clergyman, sir, and done me a deal o' damage in my trade, and now she's gone off without as much as saying 'Thank you for your kindness.' It's a hard blow upon a man as was fond of her, and I didn't make no difference, no more than if she had been my own child."

"Well, well," said the curate, "I dare say it was a trial to you; but you can't expect me to take much interest in it after all that has passed. Let bygones be bygones," said Mr. Wentworth with a smile, "as indeed you once proposed."

"Ah! sir, that was my mistake," sighed the penitent. "I would have 'umbled myself more becoming, if I had known all as I know now. You're a-going off to leave St. Roque's, where we've all been so happy," said Mr. Elsworthy, in pathetic tones. "I don't know as I ever was as 'appy, sir, as here, a-listening to them beautiful sermons, and a-giving my best attention to see as the responses was well spoke out, and things done proper. Afore our troubles began, sir, I don't know as I had a wish in the world, unless it was to see an 'andsome painted window in the chancel, which is all as is wanted to make the church perfect; and now you're a-going to leave, and nobody knows what kind of a gentleman may be sent. If you wouldn't think I was making too bold," said Elsworthy, "it aint my opinion as you'll ever put up with poor old Norris as is in the church. Men like Mr. Morgan and Mr. Proctor as had no cultivation doesn't mind; but for a gentleman as goes through the service as you does it, Mr. Wentworth"—

Mr. Wentworth laughed, though he was fully robed and ready for the reading-desk, and knew that his congregation was waiting. He held his watch in his hand, though it already marked the half minute after eleven, "So you would like to be clerk in the parish church?" he said, with what seemed a quite unnecessary amount of amusement to the anxious functionary by his side.

"I think as you could never put up with old Norris, sir," said Elsworthy: "as for leading of the responses, there ain't such a thing done in Carlingford church. I don't speak for myself," said the public-spirited clerk, "but it aint a right thing for the rising generation; and it aint everybody as would get into your way in a minute for you have a way of your own, sir, in most things, and if you'll excuse me for saying of it, you're very particular. It aint every man, sir, as could carry on clear through the service along of you, Mr. Wentworth; and you wouldn't put up with old Norris, not for a day."

Such was the conversation which opened this memorable Sunday to Mr. Wentworth. Opposite to him, again occupying the seat where his wife should have been, had he possessed one, were the three Miss Wentworths, his respected aunts, to whose opinion, however, the curate did not feel himself bound to defer very greatly in present circumstances; and a large and curious congregation ranged behind them, almost as much concerned to see how Mr. Wentworth would conduct himself in this moment of triumph, as they had been in the moment of his humiliation. It is, however, needless to inform the friends of the Perpetual Curate that the anxious community gained very little by their curiosity. It was not the custom of the young Anglican to carry his personal feelings, either of one kind or another, into the pulpit with him, much less into the reading-desk, where he was the interpreter not of his own sentiments or emotions, but of common prayer and universal worship. Mr. Wentworth did not even throw a little additional warmth into his utterance of the general thanksgiving, as he might have done, had he been a more effusive man; but, on the contrary, read it with a more than ordinary calmness, and preached to the excited people one of those terse little unimpassioned sermons of his, from which it was utterly impossible to divine whether he was in the depths of despair or at the summit and crown of happiness. People who had been used to discover a great many of old Mr. Bury's personal peculiarities in his sermons, and who, of recent days, had found many illusions which it was easy to interpret in the discourses of Mr. Morgan, retired altogether baffled from the clear and succinct brevity of the Curate of St. Roque's. He was that day in particular so terse as to be almost epigrammatic, not using a word more than was necessary, and displaying that power of saying a great deal more than at the first moment he appeared to say, in which Mr. Wentworth's admirers especially prided themselves. Perhaps a momentary human gratification in the consciousness of having utterly baffled curiosity passed through the curate's mind as he took off his robes when the service was over; but he was by no means prepared for the ordeal which awaited him when he stepped forth from the pretty porch of St. Roque's. There his three aunts were awaiting him, eager to hear all about it, Miss Dora, for the first time in her life, holding the principal place. "We are going away to-morrow, Frank, and of course you are coming to lunch with us," said Aunt Dora, clinging to his arm. "Oh, my dear boy, I am so happy, and so ashamed, to hear

it. To think you should be provided for, and nobody belonging to you have anything to do with it! I don't know what to say," said Miss Dora, who was half crying as usual; "and as for Leonora, one is frightened to speak to her. Oh, I wish you would say something to your Aunt Leonora, Frank. I don't know whether she is angry with us, or with you, or with herself, or what it is; or if it is an attack on the nerves—though I never imagined she had any nerves; but, indeed, whatever my brother may say, it looks very like—dreadfully like—the coming-on of the Wentworth complaint. Poor papa was just like that when he used to have it coming on; and Leonora is not just—altogether—what you would call a female, Frank. Oh, my dear boy, if you would only speak to her!" cried Miss Dora, who was a great deal too much in earnest to perceive anything comical in what she had said.

"I should think it must be an attack on the temper," said the curate, who, now that it was all over, felt that it was but just his Aunt Leonora should suffer a little for her treatment of him. "Perhaps some of her favorite courtiers have fallen back into evil ways. There was one who had been a terrible blackguard, I remember. It is something that has happened among her mission people, you may be sure, and nothing about me."

"You don't know Leonora, Frank. She is very fond of you, though she does not show it," said Miss Dora, as she led her victim in triumphantly through the garden-door, from which the reluctant young man could see Lucy and her sister in their black dresses just arriving at the other green door from the parish church, where they had occupied their usual places, according to the ideas of propriety which were common to both the Miss Wodehouses. Mr. Wentworth had to content himself with taking off his hat to them, and followed his aunts to the table, where Miss Leonora took her seat much with the air of a judge about to deliver a sentence. She did not restrain herself even in consideration of the presence of Lewis the butler, who, to be sure, had been long enough in the Wentworth family to know as much about its concerns as the members of the house themselves, or perhaps a little more. Miss Leonora sat down grim and formidable in her bonnet, which was in the style of a remote period, and did not soften the severity of her personal appearance. She pointed her nephew to a seat beside her, but she did not relax her features, nor condescend to any ordinary preliminaries of conversation. For that day even she took Lewis's business out

of his astonished hands, and herself divided the chicken with a swift and steady knife and anatomical precision; and it was while occupied in this congenial business that she broke forth upon Frank in a manner so unexpected as almost to take away his breath.

"I suppose this is what fools call poetical justice," said Miss Leonora, "which is just of a piece with everything else that is poetical,—weak folly and nonsense that no sensible man would have anything to say to. How a young man like you, who know how to conduct yourself in some things, and have, I don't deny, many good qualities, can give in to come to an ending like a trashy novel, is more than I can understand. You are fit to be put in a book of the Goodchild series, Frank, as an illustration of the reward of virtue," said the strong-minded woman, with a little snort of scorn; "and, of course, you are going to marry and live happy ever after, like a fairy tale."

"It is possible I may be guilty of that additional enormity," said the curate, "which at all events, will not be your doing, my dear aunt, if I might suggest a consolation. You cannot help such things happening, but, at least, it should be a comfort to feel you have done nothing to bring them about."

To which Miss Leonora answered by another hard breath of mingled disdain and resentment. "Whatever I have brought about, I have tried to do what I thought my duty," she said. "It has always seemed to me a very poor sort of virtue that expects a reward for doing what it ought to do. I don't say you haven't behaved very well in this business, but you've done nothing extraordinary; and why I should have rushed out of my way to reward you for it—Oh, yes, I know you did not expect anything," said Miss Leonora; "you have told me as much on various occasions, Frank. You have, of course, always been perfectly independent, and scorned to flatter your old aunts by any deference to their convictions; and, to be sure, it is nothing to you any little pang they may feel at having to dispose otherwise of a living that has always been in the family. You are of the latest fashion of Anglicanism. and we are only a parcel of old women. It was not to be expected that our antiquated ideas could be worth as much to you as a parcel of flowers and trumpery"—

These were actually tears which glittered in Miss Leonora's eyes of fiery hazel grey—tears of very diminutive size, totally unlike the big dewdrops which rained from Miss Dora's placid orbs and made them red, but did her no harm—but still a real moisture, forced out of a fountain which lay very deep down and inaccessible to ordinary efforts. They made her eyes look rather fiercer than

otherwise for the moment; but they all but impeded Miss Leonora's speech, and struck with the wildest consternation the entire party at the table, including even Lewis, who stood transfixed in the act of drawing a bottle of soda-water, and, letting the cork escape him in his amazement, brought affairs to an unlooked for climax by hitting Miss Wentworth, who had been looking on with interest without taking any part in the proceedings. When the fright caused by this unintentional shot had subsided, Miss Leonora was found to have entirely recovered herself; but not so the Perpetual Curate, who had changed color wonderfully, and no longer met his accuser with reciprocal disdain.

"My dear aunt," said Frank Wentworth, "I wish you would not go back to that. I suppose we Parsons are apt sometimes to exaggerate trifles into importance, as my father says. But, however, as things have turned out, I could not have left Carlingford," the curate added, in a tone of conciliation; "and now, when good fortune has come to me unsought"—

Miss Leonora finished her portion of chicken in one energetic gulp, and got up from the table. "Poetic justice!" she said, with a curious sneer. "I don't believe in that kind of rubbish. As long as you were getting on quietly with your work, I felt disposed to be rather proud of you, Frank. But I don't approve of a man ending off neatly like a novel in this sort of ridiculous way. When you succeed to the rectory, I suppose you will begin fighting, like the other man, with the new curate, for working in your parish?"

"When I succeed to the rectory," said Mr. Wentworth, getting up in his turn from the table, "I give you my word, Aunt Leonora, no man shall work in my parish unless I set him to do it. Now I must be off to my work. I don't suppose Carlingford Rectory will be the end of me," the Perpetual Curate added, as he went away, with a smile which his aunts could not interpret. As for Miss Leonora, she tied her bonnet-strings very tight, and went off to the afternoon service at Salem Chapel by way of expressing her sentiments more forcibly. "I dare say he's bold enough to take a bishopric," she said to herself; "but fortunately we've got that in our own hands as long as Lord Shaftesbury lives;" and Miss Leonora smiled grimly over the prerogatives of her party. But though she went to Salem Chapel that afternoon, and consoled herself that she could secure the bench of bishops from any audacious invasion of Frank Wentworth's hopes, it is true, notwithstanding, that Miss Leonora sent her maid next morning to London with certain obsolete ornaments, of which, though the fashion was hideous, the jewels were pre-

cious; and Lucy Wodehouse had never seen anything so brilliant as the appearance they presented when they returned shortly after, reposing upon beds of white satin in cases of velvet.—“Ridiculous things,” as Miss Leonora informed her, “for a parson’s wife.”

It was some time after this—for, not to speak of ecclesiastical matters, a removal, even when the furniture is left behind and there are only books and rare ferns and old china to convey from one house to another, is a matter which involves delays,—when Mr. Wentworth went to the railway station with Mrs. Morgan to see her off finally, her husband having gone to London with the intention of joining her in the new house. Naturally, it was not without serious thoughts that the Rector’s wife left the place in which she had made her first beginning of active life, not so successfully as she had hoped. She could not help recalling, as she went along the familiar road, the hopes so vivid as to be almost certainties with which she had come into Carlingford. The long waiting was then over, and the much-expected era had arrived and existence had seemed to be opening in all its fulness and strength before the two who had looked forward to it so long. It was not much more than six months ago; but Mrs. Morgan had made a great many discoveries in the mean time. She had found out the wonderful difference between anticipation and reality; and that life, even to a happy woman married after long patience to the man of her choice, was not the smooth road it looked, but a rough path enough; cut into dangerous ruts, through which generations of men and women followed each other without ever being able to mend the way. She was not so sure as she used to be of a great many important matters which it is a wonderful consolation to be certain of—but, notwithstanding, had to go on as if she had no doubts, though the clouds of a defeat, in which certainly, no honor, though a good deal of the prestige of inexperience had been lost, were still looming behind. She gave a little sigh as she shook Mr. Wentworth’s hand at parting. “A great many things have happened in six months,” she said—“one never could have anticipated so many changes in what looks so short a period of one’s life”—and as the train which she had watched so often rushed past that bit of new wall on which the Virginian creeper was beginning to grow luxuriantly, which screened the railway from the rectory windows, there were tears in Mrs. Morgan’s eyes. Only six months and so much had happened!—what might not happen in all those months, in all those years of life which scarcely looked so hopeful as of old? She preferred turning her back

upon Carlingford, though it was the least comfortable side of the carriage, and put down her veil to shield her eyes from the dust, or perhaps from the inspection of her fellow-travellers: and once more the familiar thought returned to her of what a different woman she would have been, had she come to her first experiences of life with the courage and confidence of twenty or even of five-and-twenty, which was the age Mrs. Morgan dwelt upon most kindly. And then she thought with a thrill of vivid kindness and a touch of tender envy of Lucy Wodehouse, who would now have no possible occasion to wait those ten years.

As for Mr. Wentworth, he who was a priest, and knew more about Carlingford than any other man in the place, could not help thinking, as he turned back, of people there to whom these six months had produced alterations far more terrible than any that had befallen the rector’s wife,—people from whom the light of life had died out, and to whom all the world was changed. He knew of men who had been cheerful enough when Mr. Morgan came to Carlingford, who now did not care what became of them; and of women who would be glad to lay down their heads and hide them from the mocking light of day. He knew it, and it touched his heart with the tenderest pity of life, the compassion of happiness; and he knew too that the path upon which he was about to set out led through the same glooms, and was no ideal career. But perhaps because Mr. Wentworth was young—perhaps because he was possessed by that delicate sprite more dainty than any Ariel who puts rosy girdles round the world while his time of triumph lasts, it is certain that the new rector of Carlingford turned back into Grange Lane without the least shadow upon his mind or timidity in his thoughts. He was now in his own domains, an independent monarch, as little inclined to divide his power as any autocrat; and Mr. Wentworth came into his kingdom without any doubts of his success in it, or capability for its government. He had first a little journey to make to bring back Lucy from that temporary and reluctant separation from the district which propriety had made needful; but in the mean time, Mr. Wentworth trod with firm foot the streets of his parish, secure that no parson nor priest should tithe or toll in his dominions, and a great deal more sure than even Mr. Morgan had been, that henceforth no unauthorized evangelization should take place in any portion of his territory. This sentiment, perhaps, was the principal difference perceptible by the community in general between the new rector of Carlingford and the late Perpetual Curate of St. Roque’s.

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